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# THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

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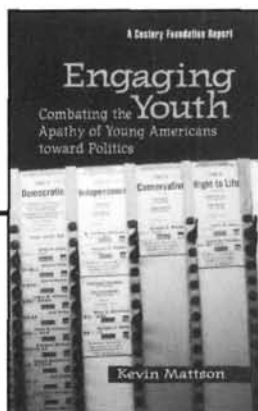
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# THE AMERICAN PROSPECT



*"The political sphere is being transformed by the Internet. Whether this transformation will be enough to defeat Bush in 2004 remains to be seen."* PAGE A6

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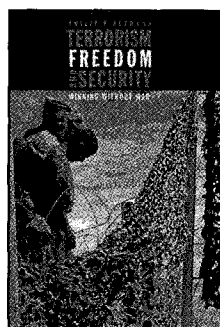
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# Elections as an Exit Strategy

In central Iraq the United States now has its own West Bank, its own encounter with terrorism as a routine occurrence rather than a rare event. As George W. Bush likes to say, we have carried the fight to the enemy—and now are conveniently at

hand to be shot at and blown up by enemies we might never have had. And because of the failure of diplomacy before the war, our forces are in the heart of Mesopotamia nearly alone, without the benefit of the broad international alliances and institutions that were the cornerstones of American foreign policy for more than half a century until this administration took office and treated those allies and institutions with contempt.

In his televised speech on Sept. 7, the president stopped dissembling about one aspect of the situation. Before the invasion, the administration assured the public that Iraq would be able to finance its own reconstruction. Now Bush finally had to tell Americans that this isn't so. But in asking Congress for \$87 billion in emergency funding, the president wasn't owning up to the full cost—likely to be on the order of \$300 billion, if things go reasonably well. And he still wasn't asking Americans to bear higher taxes or suffer cuts in other programs. "We will spend what is necessary," Bush said, but apparently no one will actually have to pay for it.

While partially conceding one fictitious premise of the war, the president's speech perpetuated another deception. Unlike his now-discredited claim about Iraq's nuclear-weapons program, this one isn't a gratuitous falsehood; it's a recurrent distortion that has been critical to selling his entire policy. Bush opened by saying, "Nearly two years ago, following deadly attacks on our country, we began a systematic campaign against terrorism." America, he continued, struck at al-Qaeda, acting "first in Afghanistan," then elsewhere in the world. "And we acted in Iraq, where the former regime sponsored terror ... ." The plain implication is that there is a direct line from the terrorism of September 11 to the Iraq of Saddam Hussein—a link that, according to surveys, more than two-thirds of Americans believe exists, even though there is no evidence for it. Cultivating this myth has been a vital element in the administration's effort to define the Iraq War as part of the war that terrorists themselves began when they attacked us two years ago.

In these pages, my fellow editors and I supported the war in Afghanistan as a justified response to September 11. Though we saw no imminent need to invade Iraq, we favored coercive inspections and other measures in concert with America's allies to force Hussein to comply with the requirements the international community had properly imposed upon him. The Bush administration seemed to us so bent on war that it was failing to lay the ground-

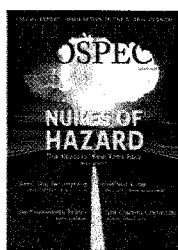
work to establish the legitimacy of American policy in the eyes of the world; as James P. Rubin shows in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*, the administration repeatedly blew opportunities for a broader international coalition against Iraq. Even if war had been the eventual result, a different strategy could have prevented the United States from assuming sole responsibility for Iraq and risking an open-ended commitment that may aggravate terrorism rather than reduce it.

Making this case against the administration is more complicated than simply denouncing the war, but it is the right case to make. Democrats in Congress running for president, such as John Kerry, are now getting slammed as inconsistent for criticizing the war after voting to authorize force against Iraq. But Congress voted on the Iraq resolution as Bush was requesting that the United Nations Security Council issue an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein. The timing made it appear that anyone voting against the resolution was undermining the president's chance of obtaining a last-minute diplomatic solution. A vote for the resolution did not imply an endorsement of Bush's rush to war, though Kerry's vote is being represented that way.

Critics in Congress are now in the same spot on the president's request for an emergency appropriation. Most of the money is for the military, and any vote against it will appear to undermine our soldiers' safety. But Democrats need to make clear that a vote for the funds is no endorsement of the administration's overall policy, which has acquired missionary dimensions. In Vietnam, "escalation" referred to an increase in military commitments. In Iraq, Bush has given us another kind of escalation—this time in political commitments. The same man who opposed nation building as a candidate now says we must do and spend whatever is needed to build up Iraq and make it terrorist-free.

That vision ought to be resisted. The alternative to Bush's policy is, first, to internationalize the security and reconstruction of Iraq through the United Nations and, second, as that transition is accomplished, to move on a rapid timetable to an elected Iraqi government, whether or not the forces antagonistic to our presence are completely subdued. If democracy is truly our aim, elections are the right moment for us to leave. Of course, if we get mired more deeply in Iraq, elections in this country offer the American people an exit strategy of another kind.

—PAUL STARR



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## Correspondence

### Campaign Reform Boomerang

IN "CAMPAIGN REFORM Boomerang" [September 2003], Thomas Byrne Edsall doubts that "the adoption of a much broader system of public financing of campaigns would produce a major ideological shift to the left." There are, however, reasons to be skeptical of Edsall's skepticism.

The United States remains virtually the only country among the developed democracies that does not provide some form of public financing for candidates to its national legislature. We alone have failed to provide the nonwealthy with the resources to run for office.

Public support for political campaigns makes a difference with regard to policy outcomes. Among the developed democracies, social support policies for the poor and the middle class are strongest in the countries where politics is most provided with public subsidies. Even more important, the two states in our own country with public funding for statewide office—Arizona and Maine—have taken the lead in social policy with regard to health care. Unlike the rest of the country, Maine has adopted a universal health-care insurance program, and Arizona has adopted a discount prescription-drug policy. Campaign-finance

reform in the form of public funding for candidates does make an important difference.

Edsall believes that prospects for public financing of electoral campaigns are "currently nil." The experiences in Maine and Arizona (and Massachusetts as well) suggest that this is an overstatement. Furthermore, the rapid growth of Democracy Matters—a campus-based organization founded in 2001 by NBA player Adonal Foyle to advocate for public financing—indicates that Edsall's pessimism may be excessive.

JAY R. MANDLE  
*W. Bradford Wiley  
Professor of Economics,  
Colgate University,  
Board Member,  
Democracy Matters  
Colgate, NY*

### Unite or Die

I WAS DISHEARTENED TO see Harold Meyerson's piece on the SEIU, HERE and UNITE ["Organize or Die," September], in which he simply equated more members with more strength. Meyerson touts—multiple times—the SEIU's 535,000 new members, but neglects mentioning that many of those "new" members come from mergers. A fellow organizer at an SEIU local where I worked used to joke that the organizing department in the SEIU should be called "Mergers and Acquisitions."

In this light, Meyerson's assertion that "it's hard to argue with ... 535,000 new members" loses its luster. And despite Meyerson's quick dismissal of it, the member-based organizing strategy of the Communications Workers of America merits another look. As a white, male college student who participated in a heart-breaking failure of a campaign to organize women of color at a nursing home, I have developed doubts about a staff-driven strategy.

Meyerson touts the New Left credentials of Andrew Stern, John Wilhelm and Bruce Raynor (the "Ivy Three," as he calls them) without questioning the lack of certain 1960s principles in the group's "progressive" unions. For example, the SEIU's plan, which aims to combine small locals into megalocals, is seen by many members—some of whom, like facilities-management and library workers at my school, are successfully deserting the union—as a top-down power grab that is slowly killing the SEIU's participatory democracy. Meyerson touches on the concern for union democracy and the need for rank-and-file leadership in one paragraph, but he is apparently too smitten with the Ivy Three to consider the issue thoroughly.

PETER ASEN  
*Member, Brown University  
Student Labor Alliance  
Providence, RI*

*Harold Meyerson responds:* Part of the SEIU's growth has indeed come from the affiliation of other unions, but the SEIU has also organized hundreds of thousands of home-care, hospital, nursing-home and janitorial workers on Stern's watch. The pros and cons of shifting from smaller locals to larger ones, a changeover that's particularly pronounced in the SEIU and the Carpenters, does indeed deserve more discussion than I had space to give it; both arguments have merit. My own bias, I confess, is toward a structurally flawed live movement over a model "small-d" democratic dead one.

### The Demo Derby

I AM VERY MUCH IN AGREEMENT with the editorials by Robert Kuttner and Robert Reich ["The Demo Derby" and "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," respectively] in the July/August issue. However, I think their appeal should go, above all, to all those who sponsor debates among the Democratic candidates, in the hope that the ground rules will be of a sort that will encourage the honing of the candidates' alternative and anti-Bush messages instead of mutual attacks.

One way to view the debates would be to see them as if they were each a musical school trying to select its best pianist to play a given concerto at a larger



competition. The competing pianists would each be practicing that concerto, not other pieces of music. Similarly, in the primary debates, the candidates should be set the task of showing how, in the general election, they would criticize Bush and distinguish themselves and their policies from his—instead of attacking one another.

ROBERT DRUECKER  
Washington, DC

## How NAFTA Failed Mexico

JEFF FAUX'S RECENT ARTICLE ["How NAFTA Failed Mexico," July/August] on the devastating consequences of free trade in Mexico neglected to mention the fact that the economic havoc wrought by NAFTA on our southern neighbor, particularly on its agricultural sector, has also ignited a series of bitter trade disputes between Washington and Mexico City that show no signs of resolution.

Faux refers to the farmers' protest in the National Congress last December as an example of the domestic consequences of NAFTA. However, he fails to mention that this particularly visible demonstration of campesino discontent was only the first in a series of protests that placed Vicente Fox's government under intense pressure to protect farmers from cheap, subsidized

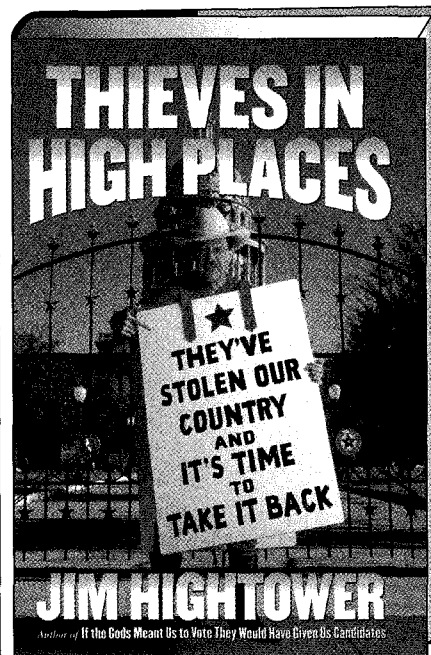
produce imported from the United States. In fact, President Fox did take short-term action to limit such imports; more important, he promised in April to seek renegotiations of the NAFTA clause calling for total integration of agricultural trade by 2008.

This was only the beginning of the friction between Mexico City and its powerful northern neighbor. The Bush administration has filed several World Trade Organization challenges against Mexico and has threatened to bring more; it has also assured powerful agribusiness lobbies that no concessions will be made in the renegotiations Fox desires.

These disputes are the most serious that have shaken NAFTA since its implementation in 1994, and given the power of agricultural constituencies on both sides of the border that favor protectionist policies, it seems likely that neither government will be willing to risk the domestic fallout created by backing down. Ironically, the same agreement that has impoverished farmers, exploited workers and wrought environmental havoc may ultimately produce lasting strains in the very bilateral relationship that it was intended to strengthen.

JESSICA LEIGHT  
Research Associate,  
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# Devil in the



Cruz Bustamante: Ho-hum would-be governor or Aztec-restoration zealot?

## Lost in the Translation

DRIVEN TO DESPERATION by the possibility that the millions the Republicans have invested in the California recall will result in the replacement of Democrat Gray Davis by Democrat Cruz Bustamante, the right-wing spin machine has kicked into overdrive, pushing the notion that the painfully moderate Bustamante is, in fact, the leader of a Chicano supremacist movement plotting the se-

cession of the southwestern United States and its reunification with Mexico.

To reach this conclusion, one has to ignore Bustamante's entire record of public service and focus instead on his membership decades ago in the student group Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA). Like many student organizations, various MEChA chapters around the country say and do very silly things from

time to time; in particular, the group's 1960s-vintage founding document veers from sensible indictments of injustices inflicted upon Mexican Americans to nationalistic nonsense. To further build a mountain out of this molehill, some commentators have sought to tar Bustamante's image by linking him to an entirely different group, La Voz de Aztlán, with which he has never been associated.

This last charge lost whatever plausibility it might have had when that organization, considered a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, began providing sympathetic coverage of Arnold Schwarzenegger's campaign. Support from a radical anti-white group isn't exactly what one would expect for a man who advocated the reelection of Nazi war criminal Kurt Waldheim as president of Austria and who sits on the board of the immigrant-bashing U.S. English, but politics makes for strange bedfellows.

Bustamante isn't the first Latino elected official to be smeared by association with MEChA. The charge of radicalism was also leveled against Antonio Villaraigosa, during his campaign for mayor of Los Angeles. That must mean that the two legislators who served as speaker of the California Assembly during the second half of the 1990s, under the guise of promoting funding for schools and parks, were actually laying the groundwork for an Aztec restoration.

Lately the focus has shifted to MEChA's provocative slogan, with one FOX News correspondent pressing Bustamante to disavow the phrase, "For the race, everything. For those outside the race, nothing." The fact that this is a mistranslation ("por la Raza" means "by the race") seems em-

KARI MONDON/EPA/LANDOV



# Details

*"It's not normal to learn on the job. It's exhaustive and difficult."*

—**"SENIOR STRATEGIST" FOR  
ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER**

in *The New York Times*

blematic both of the scant concern for accuracy among the fair and balanced and of the Republican Party's continuing difficulties in connecting with Latino voters.

## Tax, Tax, Tax; Yadda, Yadda, Yadda

WITH THE RECALL ALMOST upon us, it's hard to recognize the Golden State these days. As the usual right-wing spinmeisters and fabulists tell the tale, record high taxes have made the California economy look like Minsk under Brezhnev, and Californians are fleeing the state for lower-tax alternatives like Nevada and the Yap Islands.

The reality is a good deal less gruesome. According to a new study by the Federation of Tax Administrators, California ranked 19th among the states in the tax burdens carried by individuals and businesses. As far as job loss goes, the state has indeed lost 2 percent of its payroll positions since the peak of the dot-com boom in March of 2001—the same percentage by which the number of payroll positions in the United States has declined during that time, too.

As for Californians moving to other states, the peak years of Golden State flight came in the mid-'90s, during the governorship of Pete

Wilson (whose erstwhile staffers are now running the Schwarzenegger campaign). The collapse of the state's aerospace industry at the end of the Cold War eliminated a whole strata of decent paying professional and blue-collar jobs, particularly in southern California, during the middle of the last decade. More recently, the bursting of the dot-com bubble eliminated a whole strata of high-paying professional and technical jobs, particularly in northern California. Neither collapse had anything to do with tax rates, and the emigration was largely a response to a decline in manufacturing and the general lowering of wages in occupations with concentrations of new immigrants. According to a new study by Andrew A. Beveridge and Susan Weber, the annual median family income in Los Angeles dropped from \$50,420 in 1990 to \$40,709 in 2000.

High taxes driving people from the Golden State? How about low wages?

## Ueberroth Bows Out

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER is ducking print journalists and their pesky questions, and no wonder: They want to know how he can funnel more money to schools and reduce college tuition, as

he's promised, without raising taxes, something he's vowed not to do short of an earthquake. They want to know why money he raises from business interests is pure as the driven snow while money that Gray Davis and Cruz Bustamante raise from unions is inherently tainted and "special interest." They want to know why if Davis is a job

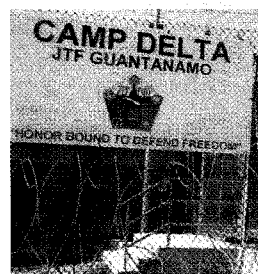
killer, George W. Bush isn't a job mass murderer. They want to know if Arnold can think, as the term is commonly understood. If it's not one thing, it's another, and it's enough to make Arnold peek carefully in all directions before venturing out in public.

Meanwhile, Peter Ueberroth, the Republican businessman who headed up the

## WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING



While U.S. forces ferret out terrorist factions in Iraq, it looks like officials at Camp Delta in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, are settling in for a long stay. In late August, the military announced plans for the construction of an additional unit to hold and interrogate detainees from the war on terrorism. The new Camp V will house 100 additional prisoners, boosting the base's total capacity to 1,100, and will boast hard walls instead of the wire-mesh and chain-link fencing of Camp Delta's four existing sections. Camp commander Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller told *The Miami Herald* in August that Camp V's main purpose is "an enlargement of our ability to do interrogations."



More room to interrogate

But whom does he plan on interrogating? Currently 660 detainees from 42 countries are held on the base; nearly half are suspected al-Qaeda members or Taliban soldiers who have been held there for more than a year.

Seventeen months after opening the camp for the short-term detention of "enemy combatants," none of the prisoners has been charged and the Bush administration has named only six detainees eligible for trial.

Human-rights groups and legal scholars have long questioned the camp's policies and living conditions. This new construction project is certain to raise more questions, uniting, as it does, the Bush administration's disregard for civil liberties with its fondness for corporate giveaways to political cronies. The contractor building Camp V is Kellogg, Brown & Root, a subsidiary of Texas-based Halliburton. The construction project was part of a \$25 million task order that the corporation won, of course, without ever having to enter a bid.

## BRAVE NEW WORDS

**BUSH RECOVERY** A curious phenomenon by which the stock market goes up, the unemployment rate goes down—and 700,000 people still lose their jobs.

**CHANGE** Something others do. According to Paul Wolfowitz, deciding to seek a new UN Security Council resolution on Iraq wasn't because of a *change* of heart on the part of the administration, but rather because the Baghdad UN headquarters bombing "changed the atmosphere in New York."

**BLACKMAIL** Archaic, no longer in use. Formerly the policy of granting concessions to North Korea in exchange for nuclear disarmament. Thanks to the "changed" atmosphere in recent months, the administration is now prepared to grant such concessions.

1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles and became baseball commissioner for a time, had been waiting in the wings should Arnold falter. Ueberroth thought that when the public realized Conan was not up to the task, he'd offer himself as a candidate with Arnold's politics but who knows from what. An old hand, he was an experienced business head who wouldn't have to learn the ropes the

day he's sworn in.

Yet as the campaign entered its final weeks, Ueberroth dropped out, and with good reason. As a candidate, he made Arnold seem informed, specific and articulate by comparison. Indeed, the very object of the Ueberroth campaign seemed to be to position the candidate as the Gasbag Businessman.

Ueberroth initially argued he could close next year's

projected \$8 billion deficit by proclaiming a tax-amnesty program that would bring the state \$6 billion. The figure, it turns out, derives from a calculation by economist Arthur Laffer, deviser of the laughable Laffer Curve, that a federal tax amnesty could realize \$100 billion while a state and local one could bring in another \$50 billion. Yet estimates of California's underground economy place its size at no larger than \$2 billion, and the notion that the state could capture 300 percent of that requires—as do all Laffer's calculations—a leap of faith, a denial of reality and some rudimentary arithmetical mistakes.

Undaunted, Ueberroth said he could save the state another \$1.5 billion by wringing the fraud out of the state's Medicaid program. Pressed during the first candidate debate over how he came by that figure, however, Ueberroth could only say, "When I am [governor], I'm going to

find the right people to investigate fraud."

In the same debate, asked how he voted on Proposition 187, the 1994 initiative to deny public services to undocumented immigrants, Ueberroth noted that "the federal government decides what we do on our borders" while failing to mention what he did in the voting booth. He was also asked his position on Proposition 54, one of two initiatives on the same October ballot as the recall, which would prohibit public agencies from collecting racial data for a number of purposes, including tracking public-health issues. Noting that he'd met Ward Connerly, the measure's sponsor, some years earlier, Ueberroth said he didn't know how he'd vote but that he'd like to see Connerly and "talk to him and understand exactly what he's doing and understand the issue better." For their part, most California voters are going to have to reach their own conclusions without their own Connerly tête-à-tête.

For a number of years now, the relocation of corporate headquarters out of the state generally and Los Angeles particularly has diminished the quality of business leadership in California. Peter Ueberroth's campaign was a case in point.

## Neosolidarity

IS THERE HONOR AMONG neocons?

You'd think that when the Joint Chiefs, working with Colin Powell, convinced the president that they needed more troops in Iraq and that he'd have to go to the United Nations to get them, neocons might acknowledge



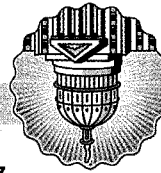


that their vision of a unilateralist foreign and military policy might need some fine-tuning. Indeed, Bush slinks back to the United Nations as a unilateralist mugged by reality—that without allies helping us in a deadly occupation, the price in life and treasure, even to a superpower, is too high to pay.

So what did neocon commissar William Kristol, editor of *The Weekly Standard*, do when Bush finally agreed to seek a UN resolution? He blamed the failure of administration policy on the man who'd followed all *The Weekly Standard's* recommendations, that's what. "For five months they let [Donald] Rumsfeld have his way, and for five months Rumsfeld said everything's fine," Kristol told *The Washington Post*. "He wanted to do the postwar



## HEROES & ZEROES



### COLIN POWELL

Waited out Rummy and Wolfie; reversed Bush's go-it-alone Iraq policy at the UN; survived to be proven right

### REP. DAVE OBEY

Recommends that Bush "allow" Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz "to return to the private sector"

### PAUL WOLFOWITZ

His predictions that Iraq could pay for own reconstruction and be secured with current force level appear clinically delusional

### DONALD RUMSFELD

Says things in Iraq off to a "wonderful start" while casualties and calls for his resignation mount

with fewer troops than a lot of people advised, and it turned out to be a mistake."

Whoa! What magazine urged Rummy and Bush and Dick Cheney to rush into Iraq? Who sang a siren song of unilateralism, ridiculing the very notion that the United States should seek or needed to seek the approval of our allies? At *The Weekly Standard*, the watchword was always,

"*Toujours l'audace!*" Right up until it became, "It's Rummy's fault," that is.

## Which Side Are Yuan?

IN ONE AMERICAN CITY after another, local governments are starting to block the construction of Wal-Marts within their jurisdictions. Underselling its competition by paying poverty-level wages here in the United States and dictating sub-subsistence wages in the sweatshops of the world where it demands its products be produced, Wal-Mart has now also emerged as a threat to the million or so supermarket clerks who pull down decent wages from America's unionized supermarket chains.

But there's one government that can't say enough good things about Wal-Mart: China's. In August, the official China news agency, Xinhua, cited Wal-Mart as one of several Western companies that "want a stable Chinese currency." In other words, Wal-Mart is not content with demanding that the clothes it sells be made in a land where workers have no power to increase their wages; now it wants to

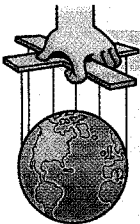
make sure that the Chinese currency stays undervalued, too.

In principle, the progression of manufacturing jobs from the United States to Mexico and Mexico to China is a natural process that can benefit everyone. As poorer countries take low-skill, low-wage jobs, American workers can take better jobs and can also benefit as consumers from the cheap imports.

But the theory undervalues the role of rapacity in human affairs. In practice, workers in most poor countries have fewer rights than American workers, so their wages lag far behind their productivity. An American autoworker and a Mexican counterpart work with essentially the same technology and have similar outputs per worker hour. But the Mexican worker earns only about one-fourth of his U.S. double. So our Mexican "trading partners" lack the purchasing power to buy from Americans as much as they sell to Americans. Result: U.S. job loss. Thank you, NAFTA.

But the logic of corporate-dominated trade doesn't stop there: Now Mexico is losing a lot of industrial jobs to China. And in the People's Republic the imbalance is even more extreme: The wages are even lower, the worker rights nonexistent. On top of everything else, the Chinese government manipulates China's currency to keep wages lower still. The result is a U.S. trade deficit that tops \$100 billion a year with China alone.

China's currency, inscrutably enough, has two names. Its official name is the renminbi, which translates as "people's money." The Chinese central bank



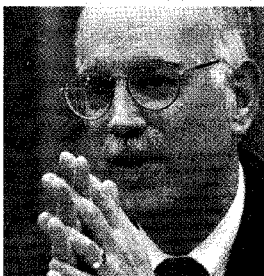
## VAST RIGHT-WING CONSPIRACY

Over the summer, the ongoing conflict in Iraq brought mostly bad news. The executives at Halliburton and Bechtel, however, must be all smiles: *The Washington Post* reported in late August that Halliburton received even more money on a no-bid basis than had previously been thought. Contracts worth \$1.7 billion are set to line the corporation's pockets, and hundreds of millions more are on the way. This is a very healthy return on the approximately \$670,000 company officials donated to Republicans in the last election cycle. Halliburton and the

Bush administration, of course, go way back (Dick Cheney served five years as the energy giant's CEO).

The initial reward to the Bechtel Group of \$34.6 million was considerably more modest, but as much as \$680 million more could be going its way if things work out. Indeed, things do seem to have a way of working out for Bechtel, which managed to accrue bil-

lions of dollars in cost overruns while managing Boston's "Big Dig" highway construction project. But perhaps Andrew Natsios, the USAID administrator responsible for awarding the contract, was unaware of this history of incompetence? Sadly, no, Natsios' last job was—you guessed it—overseeing the Big Dig. Whether this state of affairs should be attributed to the Bush administration's weak grasp on reality or its penchant for crony capitalism remains to be determined.



helpfully explains, "The basic unit of renminbi is the yuan."

China's trade strategy is rather more scrutable: Develop the country on the backs of Chinese workers by importing foreign capital attracted by ultra-cheap labor. Enter Wal-Mart with its bottom-feeder worldview: Sweatshop workers produce products so cheap that Wal-Mart can undersell its competition; Wal-Mart, America's largest employer, pays its U.S.-based workers such low wages that salaries end up lower throughout the retail sector, and an underpaid working class is compelled to shop at low-end Wal-Mart. A thing of

beauty, really, if you don't mind all the downward mobility it entails.

And keeping the Chinese currency artificially low is one more way for Wal-Mart to depress everything except its own stock prices. Problem is, the low currency is becoming a problem for Wal-Mart's current favorite American president. Although the Bush administration fought hard to get China into the World Trade Organization, China insists on keeping the yuan pegged to the dollar. Generally members of the WTO agree to play by the usual rules of commerce. And ordinarily, as a country becomes more productive

and prosperous, its currency gains value. The artificially low yuan makes it even more attractive to buy Chinese imports, because at prevailing exchange rates wages are even cheaper.

(Someone should explain all this to *The New York Times*. In pooh-poohing U.S. pressure to revalue the yuan, a *Times* editorialist scoffed, "It would ... be silly to argue that exchange rates, as opposed to cheap labor and other factors, are the primary reason Americans buy three-quarters of their toys from China." Send this writer back to Econ 101. If the value of the yuan went up, so would the price of those toys and the real wages of Chinese workers, who might then buy more products made in the U.S.A.)

Treasury Secretary John Snow recently came back from Beijing empty-handed. The Chinese promised to increase the value of the yuan—at some future unspecified date. Bush is caught between domestic politics, where he will be campaigning in swing states whose industries are getting decimated by huge trade deficits, and international urgencies. He needs Beijing's support to undo the damage of his belligerent Korea policy, and also for the UN bailout of the Iraq mess.

As a consequence, the trade deficit is likely to worsen, and Bush will have little to show the voters of the Carolinas, Ohio, Illinois and other states hemorrhaging industrial jobs. Bush's indulgence of the Chinese was a reward to his backers within U.S. industry who depend on importing cheap components—all the little Sam Waltons who make up a big chunk of the

Republicans' funding base.

But what goes around comes around. Bush's Chinese puzzle neatly ties together his reckless trade policy with his even more reckless military misadventures. Thanks to Bush and such flagship American companies as Wal-Mart, the Chinese hold all the cards.

## W. Wakes Up Screaming

WHAT NIGHTMARES HAVE Republicans thrashing in their beds, only to awaken in a cold sweat? What fearsome specters haunt their sleep and stalk their waking hours?

According to an e-mail that Bush re-election campaign chairman Marc Racicot sent to prospective donors, it is this: "Democrats and their allies will have more money to spend attacking the president during the nomination battle than we will have to defend him."

Yes, you read that right: Not enough money. Despite the \$200 million the Bush campaign is raising from corporate America, despite the trillions the administration has showered on the donor class, despite all the contracts that didn't go out for bid to favored corporations like Halliburton, despite shaping one policy after another to curry favor with GOP donors—despite all this, the Bush campaign sits up nights fearing it will be outspent by Howard Dean, Dennis Kucinich and Carol Moseley Braun.

Just how dumb do the Bush people think their potential donors really are? And if this solicitation works, will the next one offer supporters shares in that bridge in Brooklyn? ■



### OFF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Every so often, the *Journal* publishes a piece so preposterous that it seems parody. The *Journal* for Sept. 3 carried a column by one Peter J. Wallison, identified as a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and former counsel to President Reagan. "It's a bit of a mystery," he begins. Despite all those tax breaks and low interest rates, "[S]omething is holding back America's usually dynamic corporate sector."

What could it be? It couldn't be the uncertainty generated by Bush's half-trillion-dollar deficits, or the mounting trade imbalance or the dwindling purchasing power of ordinary Americans. No, the culprit is Sarbanes-Oxley. That's the law that the Republican majority in Congress very reluctantly embraced after the Enron and WorldCom scandals. Basically, Paul Sarbanes' bill (Republican Michael Oxley clambered aboard only after its passage was inevitable) requires that corporations keep honest books and hold corporate boards accountable for certifying their accuracy.

This modest reform occurred only after accounting firms were disgraced for colluding with corporate frauds, insiders looted shareholder and pension wealth, CEOs phoned up balance sheets to boost stock prices and options windfalls, boards were found to be passive captives of top executives and Fortune 500 companies like Enron were exposed as giant Ponzi schemes. In exporting its brand of capitalism to the world, America touts the "transparency" of its capital markets. Only if investors have an accurate picture of corporate earnings do they efficiently allocate capital.

The *Journal* may not like, say, regulation of the environment, but you'd think it would support honest books. Nope. Having to attest that their books are not fraudulent, Wallison avers, means that corporations will "be controlled by committees of the risk averse and timid." That's quite an admission. We've heard Marxists claim that capitalism is systematically built on deception, but we've never heard it from *The Wall Street Journal*. But, hey, the folks there should know.



THIS MONTH: WINNING THE PEACE...

# ONE SYMBOLIC VICTORY AT A TIME

NOVEMBER 2003: BUSH IS ON THE DEFENSIVE AGAIN AFTER IT IS REVEALED THAT HIS EVIDENCE OF SADDAM'S WMD PROGRAM CONSISTED SOLELY OF A SKETCH MADE ON A NAPKIN BY A HALLIBURTON EXECUTIVE AT A FUND-RAISER.

IT WAS A VERY **PER-SUASIVE** SKETCH.

WE COULDN'T TAKE ANY **CHANCES!**

BUT AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, A MONGREL DOG IS PHOTOGRAPHED ON A BAGHDAD STREET CORNER RELIEVING ITSELF ON A DISCARDED PORTRAIT OF SADDAM HUSSEIN!

THE ADMINISTRATION'S P R MACHINE GOES INTO **OVERDRIVE!**

IF THIS DOESN'T PROVE THAT THE TIDE IS TURNING IN IRAQ, I DON'T KNOW WHAT **DOES!**

UNDER SADDAM'S REGIME, THAT DOG WOULD HAVE BEEN **EXECUTED!**

OR AT THE VERY LEAST, HIT REPEATEDLY WITH A ROLLED-UP **NEWSPAPER!**

A CHORUS OF SYCOPHANTS QUICKLY JOIN IN... WITH SUCH CLEAR EVIDENCE OF OUR ONGOING VICTORY, I DON'T SUPPOSE WE'LL HEAR ANY MORE CARPING ABOUT THE COST OF THE WAR OR THE INCREASING DEATH TOLL!

LET **ALONE** THAT BUSINESS WITH THE **NAPKIN!**

AND THOSE WHO SHOW INSUFFICIENT ENTHUSIASM FOR THE LATEST TRIUMPH ARE, OF COURSE, ROUNDLY DENOUNCED.

WELL, IT'S A VERY NICE PHOTOGRAPH...BUT I STILL THINK WE'RE STUCK IN A **QUAGMIRE...**

HELLO, HOMELAND SECURITY? I'D LIKE TO REPORT AN AMERICA-HATING **TRAITOR.**

YES, I'LL HOLD.

© 2003 TOM TOMORROW FOR THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

# Sifting Through the Rubble

BY JOHN B. JUDIS

Last February I had lunch with a friend who was teaching at one of the military war colleges. He told me that the officers he knew were uniformly skeptical about a war with Iraq. "I don't think they are worried about fighting Iraq but about garrisoning it

afterward," he said. I heard similar doubts about the wisdom of the war from foreign-policy experts, oil-industry consultants and Middle East historians, but the Bush White House was not interested in these opinions. It was listening to the echo chamber set up by the Pentagon, *The Weekly Standard* and the American Enterprise Institute. A few months after George W. Bush declared victory, however, it is clear that the skeptics were right on every important count.

Here is a balance sheet:

**Liberation.** The administration foresaw a speedy military victory giving way to demonstrations of joy and gratitude from Iraqis and to the installation of a new pro-U.S. Iraqi government led by exile Ahmed Chalabi. The restoration of services and the creation of an interim Iraqi government, Chalabi promised on April 18, would take "a few weeks." Five months later, the U.S. and British occupation faces military and political opposition everywhere except the Kurdish areas in the north. Australian Paul McGeough, one of the few reporters with access to everyday Iraqis, wrote in late August, "Much of the anger and emotion in Iraq today is directed at the Americans ... [O]rdinary Iraqis cite the same reasons for the resistance as the fighters themselves—nationalism, Islam and payback."

As for the resistance, there is a difference in ferocity, but not in ultimate purpose, between the Shiites and the Sunnis. Sunnis around Baghdad and Tikrit, who remain loyal to the Baath Party, have conducted an armed resistance; many Iraqi Shiite leaders, however, like their Iranian counterparts in the 1970s, appear more conciliatory to the United States but are committed to a regime that would resemble the one in Iran and would probably be no more friendly to the United States than a pro-Baath government. While the war won't go on forever, the Americans' best hope in years to come may be a regime that is so crippled by factional strife that it cannot become the leader, along with Iran, of a formidable anti-American bloc.

**New Dawn.** The war in Iraq was also supposed to initiate a "new dawn" in the Mideast from Cairo to Kabul. Arab autocracies were supposed to crumble in the face of Iraq's democratic example. But the war has had, according to Saudi reformer Khalid al-Dakhil, a professor at King Saud University, "the reverse effect." Democratic reformers in

Egypt and the Persian Gulf states had hoped to find a path between the Saudi monarchy and the Islamic opposition, but in the face of widespread perception that America is hostile to Islam, they have risked being branded as tools of the United States by radical Islamic groups. The reformist center has disappeared.

As a result of the war, the United States has also become more rather than less dependent on the anti-democratic regimes in these countries. When the joint congressional inquiry into the September 11 attacks charged in a classified section that there were ties between al-Qaeda and the top levels of the Saudi family, the Bush administration refused to release the report out of deference to the Saudi regime. [See Michael Steinberger, "Bush's Saudi Connections," page 15.] One neoconservative who wanted to take action against Riyadh was told by the White House that "if you knew what we knew you would feel differently [about the Saudis], because they have been really helpful." Similarly, the United States has become more reliant on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, counting on him to back the potholed "road map" and to use his secret police to harass jurists at Cairo's prestigious al-Azhar Seminary who have denounced Iraq's governing council.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq seems to have rekindled rather than snuffed out Iran's nuclear ambitions. And it has not made either the Israelis or the Palestinians more pliable. Even while agreeing to the American road map, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon continued to expand settlements; the Palestinians, meanwhile, responded with renewed terrorist attacks. To make matters worse, Afghanistan has tumbled back into armed chaos. According to Pakistani journalist Husain Haqqani, who, along with al-Dakhil, is currently at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, the Taliban now controls the southeastern provinces of Afghanistan from which it is launching attacks against American forces. The region joining Afghanistan with northern Pakistan is re-emerging as a terrorist enclave. And plans for national economic development have also fallen by the wayside. A United Nations study found that Afghanistan is once again the world's largest producer of opium—an industry that the Taliban had suppressed. At best, the U.S. invasion has reinforced the unstable status



quo from Cairo to Kabul. At worst, it has set the stage for a decade of tumultuous unrest.

**The End of OPEC.** Prior to the war, Bush administration officials claimed that Iraq's burgeoning oil revenues would pay for rebuilding the country. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz told Congress on March 27, "We are dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction, and relatively soon." But these predictions, which didn't count on the costs of rebuilding Iraq's oil infrastructure or on the possibility of sabotage, turned out to be pipe dreams. Before the war, Iraq was pumping about 2.5 million barrels a day, and administration officials expected that the country could soon be producing as much as 5 million. But in August, Iraqi oil fields averaged 645,000 barrels a day. Oil revenues, which the administration expected would run as high as \$20 billion this year and \$50 billion in several years, will be lucky to reach \$3.5 billion this year. As a result, American taxpayers will have to bear the costs of the invasion and the country's reconstruction.

Administration officials also insisted that Iraq's oil would undermine the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Saudis, and keep American consumer prices down. But the exact opposite has occurred. The world price has risen above \$30 a barrel, and gasoline prices in the United States have recently climbed to nearly \$2 a gallon. The Saudis themselves are enjoying a boom year, with their economy up by 7 percent, while OPEC's control over world oil has been strengthened rather than weakened by the invasion. Iraq, of course, will eventually begin producing at prewar levels, or above, but it's unlikely that it will do so outside of OPEC and as a fiefdom of the American oil industry.

**War on Terrorism.** Invading Iraq was billed as a continuation of the war against terrorism. Part of this was based on the bogus claim that Saddam Hussein was allied to

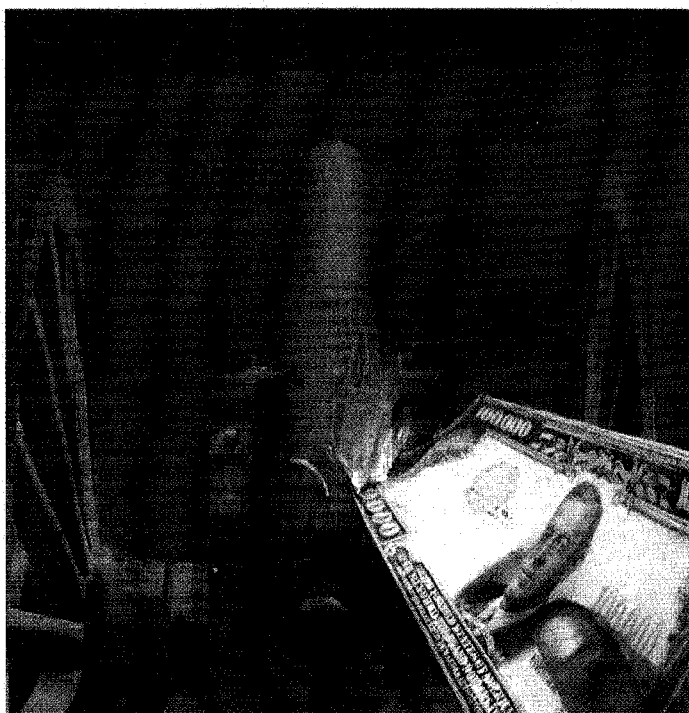
al-Qaeda. But part was based on the idea, popularized by historian Bernard Lewis, that the invasion would create a "demonstration effect" that would frighten other countries in the region into suppressing anti-American terrorist organizations. Maybe that has happened in Syria, but it doesn't seem to have occurred in Iran, Pakistan or Indonesia, where militant Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Bashir was acquitted on Sept. 2 of terrorist charges. The overall effect on the war on global terrorism has been mixed at best. From January to May, when Bush declared the war in Iraq over,

there were no major terrorist incidents. Since then, there have been suicide bomb attacks at a housing complex in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on May 12, more bomb attacks in Casablanca, Morocco, on May 16, and a suicide bomb attack at a Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Aug. 5.

There is also some evidence that in Iraq, Islamic radicals are making common cause with the Baath resistance to the American occupation. If so, the invasion of Iraq, which was supposed to prevent an alliance between secular Baathists and Islamic radicals, will have brought one into existence. This al-

liance won't necessarily threaten commuters in New York, but it will certainly endanger U.S. soldiers in Iraq, and it will make it even less likely that the Bush administration will get its way in that country. All in all, the administration's record in Iraq should call forth extensive resignations from the Pentagon (Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, Douglas Feith, Stephen Cambone), the Department of State (John Bolton), the National Security Council (Robert Joseph) and the vice president's office (I. Lewis Libby). But that is not likely to occur. If past practice holds, Bush's abysmal failures will lead to a new political offensive designed to gull the American people into believing that the invasion was really a smashing success. ■

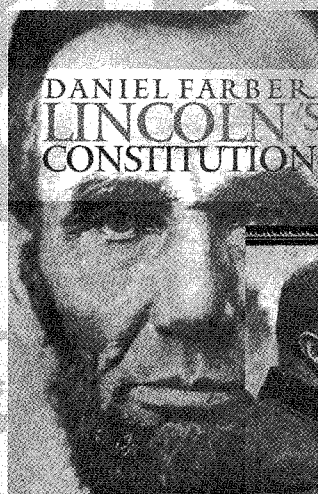
JOHN B. JUDIS is a senior editor at The New Republic.





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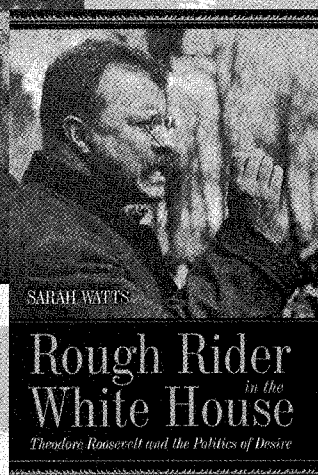


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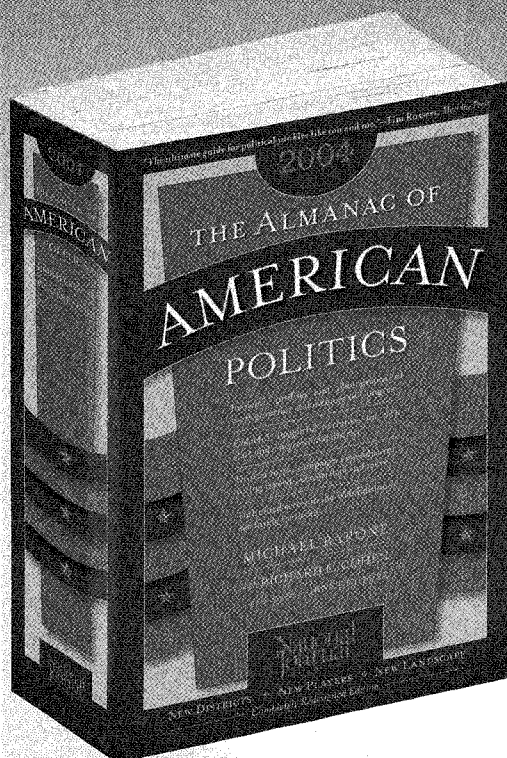
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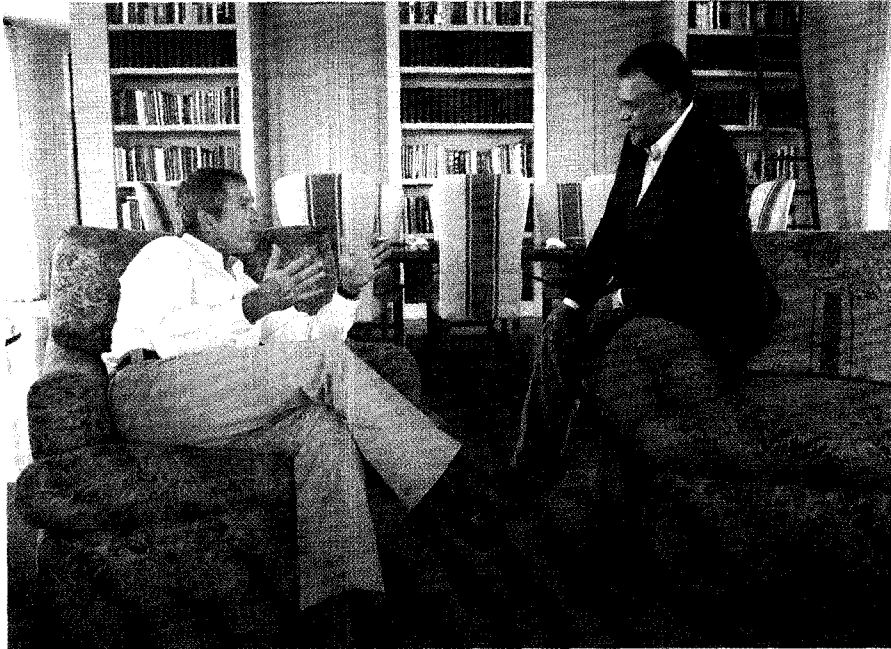
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# Dispatches



Armchair diplomacy: George W. Bush strikes a see-no-evil-doer pose with Prince Bandar bin Sultan.

## Bush's Saudi Connections

And why this is a crucial issue in 2004

BY MICHAEL STEINBERGER

SAUDI ARABIA IS THE WELLSPRING OF radical Islam, its primary source of sustenance and inspiration. Yet, since September 11, the Bush administration has consistently ducked the truth about Riyadh's role in nurturing terrorism—and concealed the truth as well. Given the many business and personal ties binding the president, his family and his associates to the House of Saud, George W. Bush's see-no-evil-doer attitude toward the Saudis is a vulnerability just begging to be exploited by the Democrats. And they need to do so if they hope to recapture the presidency next year.

Unfortunately, apart from Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), who has been blasting the administration for months over

its pusillanimous Saudi policy, the Democrats appear largely oblivious to the opportunity staring them in the eye. True, several Democratic presidential hopefuls, notably Howard Dean, have recently begun to include Saudi Arabia in their bill of particulars against Bush, but the criticism has been episodic and rather tepid.

The Democrats are instead pinning their hopes on the economy. They really seem to think it's 1992 redux, and that now, as then, rising unemployment will prove to be the Bush-beater and their ticket back to the White House. However, with the amount of stimulus in the pipeline, the economy may not be all that weak a year down the road. And even if it is, the Democrats will not

be able to send this Bush packing merely by howling about the number of jobs lost on his watch.

September 11 changed American politics. Voters care about foreign policy in a way that they haven't in a long while. The Democrats had little to say about terrorism and national security during last year's midterm elections, and they paid dearly at the polls as a result. Karl Rove plainly intends to wrap the president's re-election bid in the black crape of 9-11, and unless the Democrats can convince the public that they can be trusted with homeland defense, they are almost surely headed for defeat. That's the bad news. The good news is that the Saudi issue gives them a chance to demonstrate their mettle—at Bush's expense.

The incubatory role played by Saudi Arabia and the Wahhabite sect in fostering Islamic extremism is well documented. The desert kingdom leads the way in financing and inciting Muslim holy warriors the world over. How much of this is done with the complicity of the Saudi regime is unclear, but what is clear is that the royal family is a kleptocracy that has forestalled its own inevitable demise by redirecting domestic unrest outward. September 11 was a plot hatched by an exiled Saudi dissident, and 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis.

In the two years since 9-11, the Saudis have been an obstacle, not an ally, in the battle against Islamic terrorism. Sure, they've muzzled a few firebrand clerics and rounded up some lumpen Islamicists. But they've shown little inclination to stanch the flow of money from so-called charity organizations to al-Qaeda and other militant groups, and they've kept cooperation with the FBI and the CIA to a minimum.

The royal family's many American mouthpieces assure us that the May 12 suicide bombing in Riyadh was a

watershed—that the Saudis now understand how dangerous al-Qaeda is and will henceforth be tripping over themselves to help us. That hope is delusional and illogical. The royal family is interested only in self-preservation, and joining the fight against terrorism in any meaningful way would be an act of suicide.

John O'Neill, the sadly prescient FBI counterterrorism expert who perished in the World Trade Center attack, understood long before 9-11 that the problem of "Islamofascism" was chiefly a Saudi one. "All the answers," he said, "everything needed to dismantle Osama bin Laden's organization, can be found in Saudi Arabia." But that's only if you're willing to look, which Bush clearly is not. Indeed, he has protected the Saudis at every juncture.

The pattern was established within hours of the atrocities in New York and

Saudi investment in the Carlyle Group, the private equity firm whose rainmakers include George Bush Senior; the Saudi bankrolling of Poppy's presidential library; the lucrative contracts the Saudis doled out to Halliburton when Dick Cheney was at the company's helm. The main law firm retained by the Saudis to defend them against the 9-11 families is Baker Botts—as in James Baker, the Bush family consigliere. And, of course, there's oil, the black glue connecting all these dots.

In short, the Bushies have profited mightily from a relationship with a foreign government that can be indirectly, perhaps even directly, implicated in the September 11 attacks and other terrorist incidents and that has been the driving force behind a worldwide jihad.

The administration's coddling of the Saudis presents the Democrats with an opening the size of Texas, and they need

have been sliming Democrats for decades on issues of national security. A little retribution is long overdue, and the Democratic faithful are clearly in a fighting mood; using the Saudis as a cudgel to bash Bush would be a very effective way of channeling all that rage.

Nor could anyone justly accuse the Democrats of demagoguery; the Saudi issue is legitimate. The administration appears to have two sets of rules in the war on terrorism: one for the Saudis and one for everyone else. It's fair to ask why (plenty of conservatives are), to plant that question in the minds of voters and to tell voters that things will be different with a Democrat in the White House.

Things need to be different. It is imperative that the United States end its dependence on Middle East oil and its dysfunctional relationship with the Saudi regime, a medieval theocracy headed for the proverbial dustbin, and rightly so. Robert Baer's new book, *Sleeping With the Devil: How Washington Sold Our Soul for Saudi Crude*, meticulously details the odiousness of the royal family, and it is a mark of enduring shame that we ever crawled into bed with these characters.

Four more years of Bush will likely mean four more years of business as usual—four more years of ignoring Saudi Arabia's links to terrorism and its egregious human-rights record. On the stump and on the airwaves, the Democrats should be hammering home this point, giving the Saudis the bashing they so richly deserve and promising the American public a long-overdue reckoning with Riyadh.

Vilifying the Saudis would not just be good politics and good policy; it would be good for the Democratic soul. In pledging to free the United States from this pathetic entanglement, the Democrats would, in a sense, be reclaiming Woodrow Wilson from the Republicans generally and the neocons specifically. It used to be that the Democrats were the ethical standard-bearers in American foreign policy, committed to ensuring that the United States conducted itself in a manner consistent with its founding principles. But they have ceded the high ground of late. Disinterest in global affairs among the party's rank-and-file, coupled with the economic emphasis of the Clinton years,

## **Four more years of George W. Bush will likely mean four more years of ignoring Saudi Arabia's links to terrorism and its egregious human-rights record.**

Washington, when Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador (long known as Bandar Bush because of his coziness with the first family), was permitted to spirit members of the bin Laden clan out of the United States before the FBI could properly interview them. Since then, the Department of Justice has impeded the lawsuit filed against the Saudi regime by the September 11 families; the White House blacked out the portions of a congressional report that detailed the Saudi role in 9-11, and everyone from the president on down has steadfastly insisted that the Saudis are paid-up members of the anti-terrorism posse.

Bush can spew all the frontier rhetoric he wishes, but in the case of the Saudis, his inaction speaks louder. Why he would rather undermine the war on terrorism than confront Riyadh is an interesting question, and it doesn't require a particularly active imagination to wonder if there is more here than just oil and a bad case of realpolitik.

The links between the House of Bush and the House of Saud are deep, overlapping and notoriously opaque: the

to seize it. Bush is never more inarticulate and unconvincing than when on the defensive, and no subject is going to set him on his heels faster, and keep him there longer, than the Saudi question.

It wouldn't take much for the Democrats to turn this issue into a political bonanza. Some sustained pot stirring by the presidential candidates and various party organs would arouse the interest of the press. Soon enough, all those media sleuths who so assiduously ransacked the lives of the Clintons would be shamed into finally giving the Bush-Saudi nexus the scrutiny it deserves, and in the flash of a news cycle, the president would have a problem. Who knows where it all might lead? There are still unanswered questions about the role Saudi money played in Bush Junior's oil ventures; ditto the Iran-Contra scandal, which never quite caught up with Bush Senior. The possibilities seem endless.

Playing the Saudi card would be a hardball move, setting the stage for a bruising campaign. But Bush is no stranger to brass-knuckle tactics (just ask John McCain), and Republicans



has robbed the party of its traditional internationalist voice.

Excoriating Bush over his handling of relations with the Saudis and vowing to put abundant daylight between Washington and Riyadh would be a way of regaining that voice—of making the Democrats once again synonymous

with human-rights concerns and the quest for justice abroad. The Saudi issue is a winning one on every count for the Democrats, and they need to take advantage of it—now. ■

MICHAEL STEINBERGER is a senior editor at Foreign Policy magazine.



Sore of duty: Among other things, troop morale in Iraq is bound to suffer.

## Unilateralism Disgraced

The price we all have to pay for Bush's botched tack

BY IVO H. DAALDER AND JAMES M. LINDSAY

GEORGE W. BUSH'S DECISION TO GO to war against Iraq was based on three fundamental assumptions: Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction posed an imminent threat to the United States; turning Iraq into a stable and viable self-governing state would be far easier than previous nation-building efforts; and, once weapons were found and postwar normality returned, even those countries opposed to the war would want to contribute to Iraq's reconstruction.

Unfortunately for Bush, Iraq and the world, every one of these assumptions has proven wrong. No weapons of mass destruction have been found—nor, as yet, is there evidence of an illicit weapons program. Chaos reigns in many parts of Iraq. Widespread looting was followed by general lawlessness; guerilla-style attacks against U.S. forces; growing

sabotage of electricity, water and oil distribution networks; and terrorist attacks on major soft targets that killed scores and wounded hundreds. The United States, meanwhile, continues to bear the burdens of international involvement in Iraq virtually on its own. Of the 200,000 troops in and around Iraq at the end of August, 90 percent were American. Of the remaining 10 percent, Britain provided more than half, with the remainder consisting of a motley crew composed of 26 countries' troops, each providing only token contributions.

America's current approach to Iraq has all the makings of a national disaster. A fundamental reassessment is needed—one that abandons the unilateral course in favor of a much greater internationalization of the reconstruction effort and a rethinking of Bush's doctrine of how to exercise influence in the world.

Bush went to war against Iraq assuming that America's unrivaled power made it, in effect, omnipotent. The United States could crush any foe, quickly and at little cost. Because its motives were unquestionably pure, America could launch a preemptive, unilateral attack on Iraq that everyone would regard as a war of liberation rather than of conquest. Once the United States led, others would surely follow. "The fact of the matter is for most of the others," Vice President Dick Cheney explained days before the war began, "they don't have the capability to do anything about it anyway." Once Hussein was ousted, though, "a good part of the world, especially our allies, will come around to our way of thinking."

So the United States launched a war with barely a third of the force it had used during Desert Storm to push Iraq out of Kuwait a decade earlier. Despite all the warnings before the war and the hand-wringing by retired generals during its initial stages, it took a mere 125,000 troops just 21 days to take Baghdad. America's victory was achieved with significant assistance only from Great Britain, which contributed one-fifth of the ground force, and key Persian Gulf states, which provided bases from which to launch the attacks. The remainder of what Bush touted as a grand "coalition" was made up by such powerhouses as Albania, Macedonia, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau.

THE ABILITY TO OVERTHROW A BRUTAL dictatorship with a relatively small ground force appeared to vindicate those who had predicted a cakewalk. It also bolstered Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's conviction that the future of the U.S. armed forces requires a military transformation that emphasizes small, agile units backed by precision power capable of delivering a knockout blow from great distance. The decision to keep the number of invading troops small was "strategic and goes far beyond Iraq," Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith confirmed in July. "It's an old way of thinking to say that the United States should not do anything without hundreds of thousands of troops."

Feith's statement was a direct slap at those military officers, including Gen. Eric Shinseki, the outgoing chief of the Army staff, who before the war had

warned that it would take at least 200,000 troops to stabilize postwar Iraq. To sustain such a deployment for anything more than a few months would require a significant contribution of forces from other countries—hence the insistence of many that Washington should go to war only if it had secured commitments by others to participate in the postwar phase. America might win the war largely on its own, they argued, but it would require the support of others to win the peace.

Bush and his advisers would have none of it. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz dismissed Shinseki's estimate as "way off the mark." He also told Congress in late February that it was "hard to conceive that it would take more forces to provide stability in a post-Saddam Iraq than it would take to conduct the war itself." In any case, much of the postwar stabilization effort

economy would quickly be up and running again. Iraq's oil wealth, meanwhile, would soon provide the revenue to pay for it all.

THE PENTAGON PLANNED FOR POSSIBLE humanitarian crises and environmental damage brought about by oil fires. What it didn't prepare for was the collapse of Iraqi society, the destruction of its infrastructure through looting and sabotage, and the decision to fight the occupiers indirectly through ambushes and terrorism. "Some important assumptions turned out to underestimate the problem," admitted Wolfowitz upon returning from a five-day visit to Iraq in July. "Some conditions were worse than we anticipated, particularly in the security area." He mentioned three: "No Army units, at least none of significant size, came over to our side so that we could use them as Iraqi forces with us

effort to a little over 11,000. It may add some more, but not enough to fill the gap. A Polish-led division of slightly more than 9,000 troops is replacing a U.S. Marine division in southeastern Iraq. It is composed of forces from more than 20 countries, including Spain, Latvia, the Ukraine and Honduras. And Uncle Sam is picking up a major part of the tab for the force—\$240 million in all—which gives a whole new meaning to burden sharing.

Some other countries may add their token contributions in the months ahead. But the major military powers—France, Germany, India, Turkey and Russia—say they won't join a U.S.-led occupation force. Washington has made it "quite clear that the responsibility on the ground is in the hands of the coalition," German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer declared. "We are not part of the coalition." Only if power and responsibility were transferred to the United Nations would these countries feel obliged to contribute troops, civilians for the reconstruction effort and significant financial resources.

Here is the true cost of Bush's unilateralism. Militarily, more than half the U.S. Army is deployed in Iraq, with no exit date in sight. American soldiers are on one-year rotations, and many face the prospect of returning to Iraq within a year of going home. Morale, recruitment and retention are bound to suffer. We may soon have a broken Army. Our ability to address more pressing national-security challenges will suffer, too.

Without allies, we also incur mounting economic costs. If, as Gen. Tommy Franks said days before his retirement, we need to keep the current level of forces for at least two more years, the cost would be \$100 billion. That is \$100 billion not spent on modernizing the military, beefing up security at home, fighting AIDS and other infectious diseases, or helping to rebuild societies ravaged by failed states—not to mention the many needs of Americans at home.

These are the true costs of unilateralism. Every one of us will have to pay for them. ■

IVO H. DAALDER and JAMES M. LINDSAY are the co-authors of *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*.

## **Instead of listening to the advice of seasoned military officers or those with experience in nation-building, the Pentagon relied on the reassurances of Iraqi exiles.**

would, in fact, be done by others. "I would expect that even countries like France will have a strong interest in assisting Iraq in reconstruction," Wolfowitz explained. And, of course, the Iraqis themselves would help out. "We are training free Iraqi forces to perform functions of that kind," Wolfowitz said, "including command of Iraqi units, once those units have been purged of their Baathist leadership." The American postwar contribution would be small. By the fall, according to Pentagon plans, the U.S. military presence in Iraq was expected to be less than two divisions—about 30,000 troops.

Instead of listening to the advice of seasoned military officers or those with experience in past nation-building efforts, the Pentagon civilians relied on the reassurances of a small group of Iraqi exiles that all would be well once Hussein was gone. Iraqis would greet American soldiers as liberators. A war of precision would leave much of the bureaucratic and physical infrastructure in place. Remove the Baathist top layer, replace it with trusted (read: exiled) Iraqis, and the government and

today. Second, the police turned out to require a massive overhaul. Third, and worst of all, it was difficult to imagine before the war that the criminal gang of sadists and gangsters who have run Iraq for 35 years would continue fighting."

Wolfowitz's observations were right on the mark. What was astonishing was that these conditions came as a surprise. Defeated armies do not usually switch sides. Police in totalitarian societies are hardly versed in the intricacies of community policing and civil liberties. And sadists and gangsters are precisely the kind of people who keep fighting—especially fighting dirty.

And so Bush was forced to change course. Instead of 30,000 troops, five times as many are now in Iraq. Another 34,000 American troops support the effort from Kuwait. That is 180,000 troops in all—at a cost of \$1 billion a week. And, by all accounts, we will need that many troops there for at least another year or two.

What about the much-vaunted coalition? Where are the allies that were sure to come? Britain has reduced its initial contribution of 45,000 troops to the war



## Bullies in the Pulpit

Will a political Catholic Church help or hinder the GOP?

BY SARAH WILDMAN

IN LATE JANUARY 2001, THE NEW ADMINISTRATION had barely unpacked when George W. and Laura Bush paid a friendly visit to Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the recently inaugurated leader of the Washington Archdiocese. On the heels of that supper, Karl Rove, together with Deal Hudson, editor of the Catholic magazine *Crisis*, organized a White House meeting with some 30 Catholic leaders. Soon after, the White House established a weekly Thursday morning conference call with a national panel of Catholic leaders, who have since used it to help secure (and squelch) ambassadorial and judicial nominations.

It was the beginning of an extremely successful collaboration between a savvy White House and Catholic conservatives to reach a "core" of religious swing voters by focusing on moral issues like abortion. So far, the conservative Catholic lobby has done well with its agenda. But it has also pitted Democrats and lay Catholics against the White House, the Church's hierarchy and conservative Catholic thinkers. All of which raises a key political question: Will the White House's success with the conservative Catholic hierarchy win voters in 2004, or will it backfire by alienating the majority of less-conservative lay Catholic voters? If history is any guide, pushing too hard will send voters in the opposite direction.

Midway through the sticky Washington summer, the contentious debate over Alabama Attorney General William Pryor, nominated for a seat on the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, was in full swing. Republican senators on the Judiciary Committee were spinning the nominee's staunchly anti-abortion position as one of simple, if strict, Roman Catholic doctrine. Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) in particular attempted to tar Democrats—including Catholic committee members Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Dick Durbin (D-Ill.)—with a patina of anti-Catholic bias. Right-wing

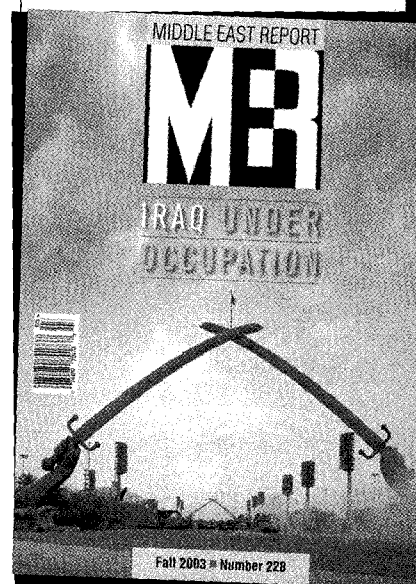
groups—including the Committee for Justice and the Ave Maria List, the latter funded by Domino's Pizza tycoon Thomas Monaghan—ran print and television ads that solemnly displayed closed courtroom doors and the historically heavy phrase "Catholics need not apply." The fight over Pryor was the loudest, but by no means the only, fight over Catholic identity this year. In mid-January, the Vatican released a "doctrinal note," timed to coincide with the 30th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, stating, "Those who are directly involved in lawmaking bodies have a grave and clear obligation to oppose any law that attacks human life."

In the wake of the Vatican statement, bishops and archbishops publicly chastised a number of Catholic Democrats for diverging from Catholic doctrine. The first volley came from Sacramento Bishop William Weigand, who took abortion-rights Gov. Gray Davis (D-Calif.) to task. "Anyone," Weigand stated, "politician or otherwise, who thinks it is acceptable for a Catholic to be pro-abortion is in very great error, puts his soul at risk and is not in good standing with the church." Weigand suggested that Davis should refrain from taking communion until his position on abortion changed.

Then in March, a letter purportedly from Bishop Robert Carlson to Sen. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) was leaked to *The Weekly Standard*. In it, the bishop reportedly appealed to Daschle to remove all references to being a Catholic from the latter's campaign literature. Neither the bishop's office nor Daschle would confirm or deny the letter, but anti-abortion groups were thrilled. Soon after, Baltimore's Cardinal William Keeler publicly rebuked Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) after she voted against a bill banning "partial-birth abortions." Rumors—fueled, it seemed, by the Catholic right—swirled through Washington about other Democrats running afoul of their Catholic heritage.

Is this political intervention appro-

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priate for Church leaders? The Rev. Robert Sirico—president and co-founder of the Acton Institute, a conservative think tank that teaches the clergy about free-market economics, and a participant in the Thursday morning White House conferences—believes that these are not political denunciations but spiritual ones. “These politicians who dissent from teaching on the dignity of human life and protection need to accept ... that they are not authentically Catholic,” he said in an interview.

Other conservative Catholics agree. “The bishops have the canonical right to control the use of the word ‘Catholic,’” explains Deal Hudson. “[T]hey can tell an organization or a person not to use the word ‘Catholic’ because they are representing something that is antithetical to the faith.”

But not all Catholics believe that to be true. “There is an enormous effort under way to try to bring politicians in line with official Catholic positions on abortion and homosexuality,” says Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for Choice. “However, the fact of the matter is that the Catholic Church cannot demand this of politicians and has no enforcement power if politicians choose to ignore these suggestions. ... [I]t is not a sin to disagree with the church on public policy.”

Robert Drinan, an ordained Jesuit priest, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center and a former Massachusetts congressman, says the Church’s leaders “are out of line. ... [T]hey have no right to judge in public the culpability of [a] particular person. That’s Inquisition stuff. If you are denied the sacraments, it’s a prejudgment, and furthermore, it’s imposing an ecclesiastical norm on a political question. You can’t do that.”

More important politically is that, contrary to conventional wisdom, such attacks on Catholic politicians who don’t follow Vatican teachings to the letter haven’t helped Republicans in the past. In October 1996, when Mary Landrieu, then Louisiana’s state treasurer, was running for a U.S. Senate seat, Archbishop of New Orleans Philip Hannan went on the offensive. If “a person actually believes in Catholic doctrine, then I don’t see how they can vote for Landrieu without a feeling of sin,” he told parishioners. When Bill Richardson ran for governor

of New Mexico in 2002, Archbishop Michael Sheehan endorsed the distribution of fliers from pulpits across the state that chastised the former energy secretary for his position on abortion. And there was the famous 1984 clash between Archbishop John O’Connor and then-Gov. Mario Cuomo (D-N.Y.) over abortion rights.

Though these public denunciations are humiliating, they have also been ineffectual. Polls taken around the 2000 presidential election showed that Catholics tend to ignore their religious leaders on political issues. In fact, when the church takes a stand against a candidate, it almost always helps ensure that the candidate wins. “These are huge strategic mistakes, to try to set up stringent criteria about who has the right to call himself Catholic,” says Dr. Mark Rozell, professor and chairman of the politics department at Catholic University in Washington. “The majority of American Catholics have ambivalent feelings on [a variety of] doctrinal issues,” he explains, “The tactic tends to backfire when leaders in the church or political community ... set up a stringent standard that requires someone to agree 100 percent or get out of the church.”

Mary Landrieu is a good example. “Sin” or no sin, she won her seat in 1996 and actually took New Orleans, garnering crucial votes in a tight election. California state Sen. Lucy Killea is another example. In 1989, Bishop Leo Maher of San Diego told the candidate that she was not welcome to receive communion because of her abortion-rights position. When Killea came from behind to win the election, her opponent groused to newspapers that if only “the bishop had stayed out of it, I would have won.” And Richardson, of course, found himself in the New Mexico governor’s mansion despite his run-in with the church.

So why should the Catholic Church engage in such political mudslinging if it isn’t likely to succeed? For the Church it may be about trying to find a moral center. Even before the recent sex-abuse scandals, the Church had spent the last three decades grappling with a diminishing priesthood and a lay population that has, since the contraception debates of the 1960s, selectively adhered to or ignored Vatican doctrine.

Of 60 million Catholics in America, only about one-third, or 15–20 million, are currently considered “core” Catholics—meaning they frequently attend mass and are committed to the centrality of religion in their lives—down from 75 percent or higher in the 1950s. It is this core, which still represents the largest single religious group in America, that began leaving its historic home in the Democratic Party for the anti-abortion Republican Party in the mid-1970s. These voters constitute a juicy voting block if you can get them past their historic affiliation with the labor-loving, social-justice side of the Democratic Party. Hudson believes this core to be “social-renewal” voters whose “top priority is a bundle of issues including life, family, moral decline.” In other words, compassionate conservatives.

Most non-core Catholics, however, diverge from Church teachings on issues of abortion, contraception and sexuality, and for them Catholic faith and political affiliation are not so neatly linked. Politicians and lay people alike tend to adhere to a doctrine perfected by Cuomo in 1984, when he claimed in a speech at Notre Dame University that he was personally opposed to abortion but politically supportive, a position derisively called “Cuomism” by Church leaders.

That means that while Hudson and other participants in the Thursday morning calls with the White House may be marketing conservative social-renewal Catholics to the Republican Party, the base might not take so kindly to some of the rhetoric in Washington this past year.

“Questioning people’s piety or adopting religious labels or saying someone is not sufficiently religious or sufficiently Catholic [are] appeals that don’t play well with Americans,” says Catholic University’s Rozell. “If Republicans play some of these issues too hard, there is the possibility they could alienate a significant segment of Catholic voters, who are closer to the Republican position on abortion but are uncomfortable with heavy-handed rhetoric on calling themselves Catholics—or have an open enough view on alternative interpretations, even if they themselves disagree.” ■

SARAH WILDMAN is a writer living in Washington, D.C.





# THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

A SPECIAL REPORT ON YOUTH AND POLITICS

OCTOBER 2003

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Garance Franke-Ruta

### **Political Identities**

Anna Greenberg

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## SPECIAL REPORT YOUTH AND POLITICS

THE AMERICAN PROSPECT • OCTOBER 2003

# Re-Generation

This special supplement was written mostly by writers in their 20s and early 30s. As these articles show, young Americans are no less idealistic or purposeful than their parents. But after a generation of dubious wars, scandals large and small, attacks on government and the deferral of public remedy, the youngest voters are justifiably skeptical of politics as an instrument of public good. They have also defined "liberal" and "conservative" rather differently than their parents did. If older Americans failed to pass along a society that invites civic engagement, young people are redefining politics and will reclaim public life in their own way, just as 10 generations of Americans did before them.

This collection was generously underwritten by the William T. Grant Foundation, which gave the editors full authority for the content. An ongoing discussion of these issues will continue at **[www.prospect.org](http://www.prospect.org)**. Please join the conversation.

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# New Generation, New Politics

As Generation Y steps into the polling booths, how will political life change?

BY ANNA GREENBERG

A new generation is coming of age in America and politicians ignore it at their peril. Generation Y, as it's been called, is expected to be as large as the Baby Boom Generation, and when the full group is of voting age, it could have as much political

significance. It is a generation that has thus far shown itself to be disdainful of politics, cynical about political parties and more likely than any other age group to support third-party candidates. At the same time, these young people are engaged in the life of the community and expect to improve it. To write them off politically is to risk someone else mobilizing a sleeping giant.

But reaching Generation Y voters will take some doing. They have little interest in retirement security or reforming Medicare, the dominant political issues of the last few election cycles. They are a racially diverse and, in many ways, a politically progressive group; as a result, more of them call themselves Democrats than do their predecessors in Generation X and even the Baby Boom Generation. But their political worldview contains a complicated mix of liberal and conservative perspectives. Either Democrats or Republicans could plausibly win broad favor with this generation, but only if they can find the right message and deliver it with authenticity in a medium that young people are tuned to.

Political professionals usually dismiss Generation Y because it votes at a much lower rate than older Americans. Yet even at this depressed rate, voters under 25 years old will constitute between 7 percent and 8 percent of the electorate in 2004. They will rival in size other coveted swing groups such as "soccer moms" and "office-park dads." More important, they are the future electorate.

## THE LONG GOODBYE

The young voters of Generation Y in many ways represent the culmination of years of disaffection with politics and traditional political institutions. Their grandparents or great-grandparents are the Silent generation, the electorate's strongest partisans whose enduring ties to the Democratic Party were forged during the Franklin D. Roosevelt years and the formation of the

modern welfare state. These seniors grew up at the height of civic engagement and collective community in America, buying war bonds, saving rubber bands, the oldest of them serving overseas. And as study after study has demonstrated, they continue to participate in politics at much higher rates than their progeny. (Because generations are rough categories, defined with different cutoff dates by different researchers—and because voting and polling results are often reported not by generation at all but by other age groupings—the data are not tidy. Nonetheless the overall picture is unmistakable.)

Partisan allegiance weakened among the next generation, the baby boomers, as young people challenged traditional institutions and social mores during the civil-rights, anti-war and women's movements. Participation in electoral politics remained relatively high in 1972, when 50 percent of baby boomers—

those under 25 years of age—voted in the presidential election. But the subsequent fallout from the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal marked them with a growing distrust of government and political leadership.

The children of the baby boomers, Generation X, were thus born into a world of increasing cynicism about government, and they grew up during the Ronald Reagan and George Bush Senior administrations, when government was under systematic assault and social ills were blamed on a failed welfare state. Their depressed outlook was further fueled by a multitude of griefs—from rising divorce rates to the economic recession to the crack epidemic to the AIDS explosion—that made the world a dangerous place. In 1984 and 1988, as Generation X came of voting age, only 40.8 percent and 36.2 percent of people under 25 voted in those respective presidential elections. And this generation remains the most disaffected—and conservative—in the electorate.

Today's youngest voters, Generation Y, were raised

### A ROUGH SKETCH OF THE GENERATIONS

	Approx. birth	When they grew up
Generation Y	1980–present	Clinton years
Generation X	1965–1980	Reagan years
Baby Boom	1945–1965	1960s and 1970s
Silent Generation	1925–1945	WWII and postwar boom
GI Generation	1900–1925	Depression and WWII



during the heady 1990s, a time of seemingly endless dot-com possibilities, as well as social projects such as AmeriCorps that were championed by the nation's political leadership. Volunteer programs blossomed and flourished on college and high-school campuses. (As Robert Putnam shows in *Bowling Alone*, the rise of American volunteerism since 1975 is due solely to increases among the senior citizens of the most civically engaged generation and among people born after 1975.) But these more optimistic times did not generate any more interest in electoral politics. Just 32 percent of voters under 25 participated in the 2000 presidential election, even lower than the turnout of Gen Xers at the same age.

## THE REPUBLICAN SURGE

It is a staple of political science that people's political identities are largely formed in their youths—and are influenced not just by their families, schools and religious institutions but also by the political times in which they come of age. Moreover, studies show that these influences endure. As Warren E. Miller and J. Merrill Shanks demonstrate in *The New American Voter*, the percentage of Democrats and Republicans in the electorate changes over time largely because one generation dies out and another enters, not because contemporary events alter party identifications across generations.

Thus, the recession and economic insecurity that Gen Xers faced in their early 20s, as well as 12 years of Republican administrations, left behind a cohort that entered the Republican camp in droves in the 1980s and stayed there. In 2000, according to the University of Michigan's National Election Study, only 26 percent of voters between 30 and 39 years old (mostly Gen X voters) called themselves Democrats, making them the least Democratic sector of the electorate. Survey data collected by Democracy Corps, a Democratic polling and strategy group, show the same patterns. (See chart above.)

Generation Y, however, halted these trends toward Republicanism fairly decisively. According to the National Election Study, only 18 percent of voters under 30 called themselves Republicans in 2000, compared with 35 percent of voters aged 30 to 39. Exit polls show that in 1984, with the first Gen Xers reaching the voting booths, 59 percent of voters under 30 supported Reagan. By 2000, as Generation Y began to vote, 53 percent of voters under 30 voted for Al Gore or Ralph Nader, compared with 50 percent of voters ages 30 to 44.

It is important to note that the move away from the Republican Party is driven, in part, by the nation's growing racial diversity. Only 67 percent of Gen Y voters are white, and that has a profound effect on the generation's partisanship. African American and Latino voters are significantly more likely to identify themselves as Democrats and support Democratic candidates than white voters. Fully

90 percent of African Americans and 67 percent of Latino voters supported Gore in the 2000 presidential election.

At the same time, as the Democracy Corps data shows, Gen Y voters are more likely than any other generation to call themselves independents. According to the National Election Study, nearly 47 percent of voters under 30 called themselves independents in 2000. Trends in voting for third-party candidates confirmed it. In 1998, Jesse Ventura won 46 percent of the under-30 vote, compared with 29 percent among older voters. In 2000, Nader received 5 percent of the vote from those under 30, compared with 2 percent among voters over 30 years of age.

## THE VIEW FROM THE 20S

These numbers reflect a complicated worldview. The youngest generation of voters is cynical about politics but attracted to independent candidates. It leans Democratic, unlike Generation X, but its attitudes do not neatly mirror the agenda that has developed in the Democratic—or, for that matter, the Republican—Party. In fact, its mix of liberal and conservative perspectives do not map neatly onto any party's current platform.

For example, younger voters hold more expansive notions about the responsibilities of government than do older voters; at the same time, they are very individualistic about problem solving and supportive of market solutions. These seemingly contradictory views reflect a national narrative in the 1990s that included Bill Clinton's progressive vision of the role of government in people's lives and the country's simultaneous insistence that we end "welfare as we know it."

Almost 70 percent of voters under 30 support bigger government over smaller government, and nearly two-thirds of young people between 15 and 25 years of age think that government should do more to solve people's problems.

Nonetheless, young people support the privatization of Social Security, private health insurance for prescription drugs and school vouchers. The data suggest that young people generally want government to "care," but they do not have well-developed ideas about how that might work.

The nation's youngest voters are by far its most socially liberal voters. For instance, 72 percent of those between 18 and 24 agree that there should be "laws that provide gay and lesbian couples who form civil unions the same legal rights as married couples when it comes to things like inheritance, employer-provided health insurance and hospital visits." More than half of adults under 30 think that gays and lesbians should have a legal right to get married, compared with just 37 percent of baby boomers and 20 percent of seniors. Younger voters are also more supportive of affirmative action than the rest of the electorate and hold a more positive view of immigrants.

But this liberalism is not necessarily tied to other social issues. It does not translate into more support for abortion

PARTISAN IDENTIFICATION BY GENERATION					
	Gen Y	Gen X	Boomers	Silent	GI
Democrat	38%	36%	37%	39%	39%
Independent	29	25	27	24	20
Republican	33	38	35	36	41
Net D-R	+5	-2	+2	+3	-2
Source: Democracy Corps, 2001-2002					



rights, feminism or relaxed sexual mores. People under 30 are no more pro-choice than their predecessors who fought for abortion rights in the '60s and '70s. Unlike the Baby Boom Generation, which linked many issues such as civil rights, abortion choice, women's rights and sexual freedom into a coherent agenda, Gen Y is untroubled by simultaneous expressions of open-mindedness and traditionalism.

### THE YOUTH AGENDA

While everyone bemoans the fact that young people do not participate in politics, neither major party has done much to reach out to them. In the last three election cycles, the Democrats have focused on seniors' issues such as retirement security and prescription drugs. It is remarkable that the party has maintained an edge with young voters given this utter disconnection from them. The Republican Party's emphasis on tax cuts has tapped into a concern of young people (especially those without a college education), but its stances on gay rights and the environment have been fundamentally at odds with young voters' values.

Both parties have largely chosen to communicate the same, older-oriented message to all voters. But young voters have a different set of concerns than their elders. For instance, everyone is worried about the economy, but older people feel the recession in the declining value of their 401(k)s and the rising cost of health insurance; the young, meanwhile, worry about job security and wages. Some 15.6 percent of people between ages 18 and 24 are currently without jobs, compared with 6.4 percent in the total population, and unemployment rates are skyrocketing among minority youth.

Young voters' concerns about education—consistently one of their top interests—are also distinct. They support more funding and smaller class sizes for grades K-12, but they also are having a difficult time paying for college, whether that means a four-year bachelor's degree from a prestigious university or an associate's degree from a community college. The need to work while in school and the later burden of paying off student loans put an enormous financial strain on the many young people whose parents can't foot the full bill. Today's rising tuitions, the less generous federal loan policies embedded in the new tax code and the cuts in state budgets for higher education can only exacerbate this situation.

Generation Y also places a higher priority on environmental issues than older voters. Significantly more young people—especially young men—oppose drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, for exam-

ple, than older voters, and they are more likely to say that protecting the environment is more important than developing new sources of energy and encouraging economic growth.

There is a populist, progressive agenda that could reflect young people's core values and priorities—and, indeed, lend them some coherence. It would call on government to actively provide opportunities for people to acquire the skills and resources they need to succeed in life. It would not, however, encourage dependence on government but instead offer the means for self-improvement and self-reliance. Such a platform would call for individuals to take personal responsibility for their behavior, government to protect the earth's natural resources, and society to be open to difference and diversity.



Sign language: The question of how to reach Generation Y's voters is one both parties are asking.

But there is also a conservative agenda that might win over Generation Y. This platform would invoke personal responsibility in matters economic, as well as sexual. It would emphasize what government takes away from individuals (tax dollars, for instance) and the role markets might play in solving their problems. Certainly conservatives would have to be mindful of the racial diversity and social liberalism of this generation, but these young voters are not beyond their reach.

For the moment, Generation Y has stopped the national slide into Republicanism and offers a more optimistic and open view of the future. But politically it remains very much up for grabs—and adrift in a political culture that offers stale political leadership and old ways of talking about politics. In a country split 50-50 politically, the side that successfully speaks to this generation may well be the side that wins. ■

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# Virtual Politics

How the Internet is transforming democracy

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

Retired four-star Gen. Wesley Clark seemed a very appealing fellow to retiree Eric Carbone. "I came out of retirement to work for this guy," he says, looking up from his computer in an office just around the corner from the White House. Carbone,

a member of DraftWesleyClark.com, spent the past two months encouraging Clark to enter the race for the Democratic presidential nomination. But Carbone's not a gray-haired, wizened old fellow deferring a move to Palm Beach because of his passion for the good general and worries about national-security issues.

Carbone is only 33 years old. He's been retired for just one year. He's a little-heralded member of a new breed whose fates used to be detailed in slick, now-defunct dot-com magazines like the *Industry Standard*. He'd made a fortune in the tech sector after selling his Internet company, Real Fans Sports Network, to AOL Time Warner. Today, without a whole publishing sector devoted to their every move, former tech-world people like Carbone are less visible than they used to be. And yet they are also more powerful than ever.

As this magazine went to press, Clark had not announced whether he would enter the 2004 presidential campaign. But veterans of the Internet boom and bust had nonetheless flocked to DraftWesleyClark.com, just as they have to the real campaigns of other Democratic presidential wannabes. DraftWesleyClark.com's co-founder, 36-year-old John Hlinko, was laid off from Silicon Valley startup Third Voice in 2001. His partner at DraftWesleyClark, attorney Josh Margulies, had run a failed firm called LawyerAccess.com. By early September, Carbone, Margulies and Hlinko—along with several others—were managing a massive online fund-raising and signature-gathering effort for a potential Clark run.

Years in the online trenches may not have landed all of these Internet veterans the money Carbone got. But they have given them the skills and the know-how to manage the press, mobilize the troops and raise some serious cash—or at least pledges of it. (DraftWesleyClark.com persuaded people to pledge more than \$1 million in just a month to the undeclared candidate.) More importantly, their years of riding high in the bubble economy also gave them, when it burst, a brush with a highly unpleasant condition that's afflicted people of their educational level more during the recent recession than in past economic downturns: unemployment. Since the stock market peaked in March 2000 and collapsed after the attacks of September 11, a

whole generation of highly skilled, well-educated, entrepreneurial men and women has had to face questions about whether to go back to school, go on the dole, mail in those COBRA health-insurance forms—or simply go without. In short, after three years of a downturn that began in the communications and technology sectors, it should be no surprise that people who spent time there might look at the political world in a whole new way.

The Internet boom created a new base of wealth free from long-standing allegiances or deep involvement in traditional political circles and a new generation of individuals steeped in the boom years' free-agent, entrepreneurial, startup mentality. Many of these individuals gained extremely valuable technical skills and the raw power to make what they envision so. As a result, the political sphere is being transformed. Whether or not this transformation will be enough to defeat George W. Bush in 2004 remains to be seen. But it has already rocked the political world, thrusting former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean into the position of front-runner in the Democratic nominating contest.

The most prominent of the new political-technical hybrid organizations are the two based nearest the epicenter of the online world, California's Silicon Valley and New York's Silicon Alley. Both MoveOn.org and Meetup.com were founded by individuals who'd made their fortunes in the technology sector and then looked around for something new to do. Wes Boyd and wife Joan Blades, two of the founders of MoveOn.org, earned their fortunes with Berkeley Systems, the manufacturer of the popular Flying Toaster screensaver. Meetup.com was co-founded by Scott Heiferman, a 31-year-old marketing genius who made his millions pioneering all those flashing banner ads that decorate today's Web pages. In 1999 he sold his company, i-traffic, and left after it was acquired by Madison Avenue marketing giant Omnicom. And then he started reading.

One of the books he picked up was Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, which grew out of a series of articles published in the *Journal of Democracy* and this very magazine between 1993–94. In 1996, Putnam revisited his



thesis that America had suffered a profound breakdown in civic engagement and associational activity. [See "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," *TAP*, Winter 1996.] After carefully reviewing factors, which run the gamut from increased work hours to the entrance of women into the formal economy, Putnam concluded that "the culprit is television."

"Controlling for education, income, age, race, place of residence, work status, and gender, TV viewing is strongly and negatively related to social trust and group membership, whereas the same correlations with newspaper reading are positive," wrote Putnam. Americans had become increasingly mobile, increasingly educated, and increasingly disconnected from and distrustful of one another. Television sucked up their time, divided them from one another in isolated homes and fed them distorted visions of themselves. Meanwhile, the power of money in politics grew as politicians and lobbyists and business interest groups took advantage of the loopholes in the campaign-finance laws.

Enter the Internet, which has traits common to both television and newspapers. Though spending time on the Internet isolates people in physical space, the fundamental quality of the Internet is that it is ultimately interactive. The most common Internet applications—e-mail and instant-messaging software—drive people into epistolary relations. And so the Internet begins by replacing the primacy of the image with the primacy of the written word.

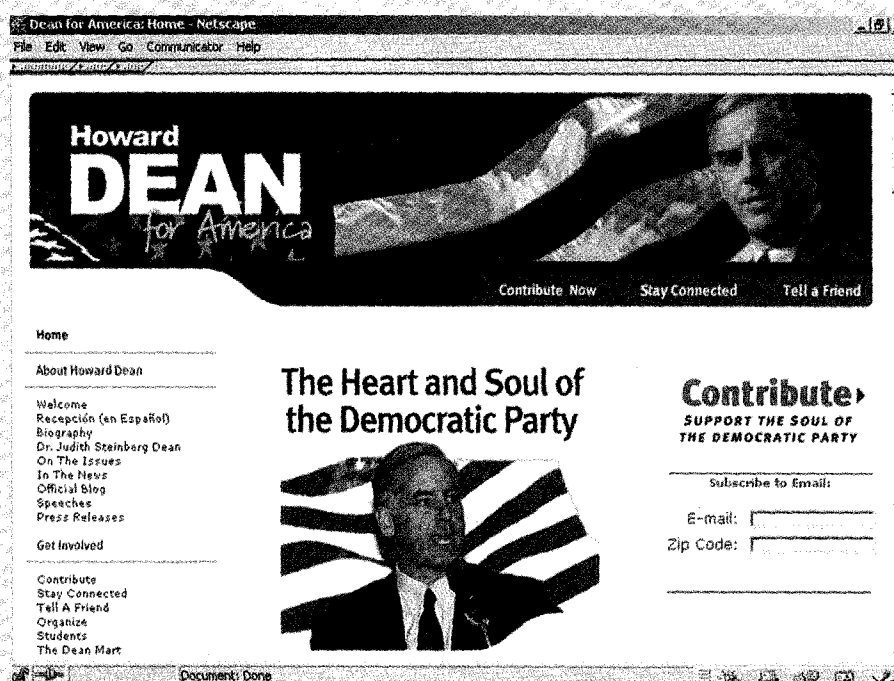
"Technologies are social organizations primarily, they're not hardware," notes Stirling Newberry, a 36-year-old theorist with ClarkSphere.com, another of the online grass-roots efforts urging Clark to campaign. It all goes back, he says, to what Marshall McLuhan noted. "TV is not just a technology, it's a social structure, too. People organize themselves around it to use it," says Newberry. But now, "in the modern age, the technology that is driving how people communicate at the front end of the campaign is the Internet. It's not small journals like *The Partisan Review*."

Heiferman's bet was that people, even in this wired world, still want most what they have always wanted: one another's society. "People like to 'Meetup,'" Heiferman told the audience of the New Democrat Network's annual meeting in Washington this past June. "The evidence? You, here."

It was an odd moment: curly-headed, pug-nosed Heiferman, in his horn-rimmed hipster glasses, telling the more conservative, mainstream Democratic group about a future that seemed, from his presentation, likely to be much

less orderly than the political arena they knew. The audience applauded politely, but didn't seem to fully get it.

Others have. If Heiferman's second act was based on the understanding that people crave social interaction within their communities, the company's recent fame has been based on the unexpected success the group has had in helping local communities reconnect with the national agenda. One-year-old Meetup.com began by providing communities of interest—such as knitters and Chihuahua owners—a means to easily organize in-person gatherings. It has become a powerful grass-roots organizing tool for the Dean campaign. More than 100,000 people have signed on with Meetup to support and learn about Dean. The firm has now been hired by dozens of other politicians and groups, including the pro-Gray Davis outfit Californians Against the



Web of receipt: Howard Dean's site has helped vault the candidate to front-runner status.

Recall, DraftWesleyClark.com, Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio).

Dean campaign manager Joe Trippi understands the power of the organic, almost anarchic medium of the Internet, perhaps better than any person in politics today. Though he is hardly an Internet millionaire, his own roots in the online world run deep. For the past two and a half years, he has worn the hat of chief technology officer at Catapult Strategies, a marketing and public-relations firm based in San Jose, Calif., and Alexandria, Va., that works with pre-IPO tech companies, in addition to his role as a partner with Trippi, McMahon and Squier, the political public-affairs and strategy firm. He's been active in several development-stage companies, such as Wave Systems, whose Wavexpress streaming video subsidiary now creates and runs HowardDean.tv, an all-Dean, all-the-time online news channel. And Trippi worked for Progeny Linux Systems, the



upstart computer-operating system whose kernel—or central program—is written by a community of coders in a meritocratic “open source” system where anyone can propose new code and, if it works, see it included in new versions of the program. “I always wondered how you could take that same collaboration that occurs in Linux and open source and apply it [in politics],” Trippi told Stanford law professor and blogger Lawrence Lessig in an online interview. “What would happen if there were a way to do that and engage everybody in a presidential campaign?”

The answer Trippi came up with is the same one that led him to Meetup.com: blogs. After the downturn hit the technology sector, the economic retrenchment spread rapidly to those sectors that had become most dependent on the dot-coms: advertising and publishing. Not only did much of the tech media collapse, site after online site shut down. Advertising went into its worst decline since the Great Depression, forcing old media to take a serious financial hit. Thousands of reporters lost their jobs, and those who kept them suddenly experienced a new reality of pay cuts and insecurity. Though Web logs, or blogs, had been around for some time, the new economic reality produced a sudden deficit in online reading material and a sudden glut of writers. Meanwhile, the contested election of 2000 and the September 11 attacks produced a lot of stuff to write about.

Many blogs began as side projects by journalists without day jobs, such as [andrewsullivan.com](#), [talkingpointsmemo.com](#) and [kausfiles](#). Others are informal outgrowths of other publications, such as the *National Review*’s The Corner or this magazine’s Tapped. Still others are maintained by individuals with area-specific expertise or university tenure, such as Glenn Reynolds’ [InstaPundit.com](#). More recently, dozens of local and national political sites have sprung up. As recently as a year ago the “blogosphere” was dominated by conservative political voices. Then came the Democrats’ 2002 congressional election defeat and the war in Iraq. Since then, the liberal blogosphere has exploded and become interconnected to an astonishing extent, so that today there is, in the online world, a daily dialogue on all matters of state to be found.

Trippi was reading Jerome Armstrong’s [MyDD.com](#)—founded in 2001, it’s now one of the older liberal blogs—when he first learned that there was a company called Meetup being used by Dean supporters to self-organize. He’d been reading the blogs for two years, and soon he added a Meetup link to the Dean blog. Mathew Gross, a former MyDD contributor from Utah who drove to Vermont and deposited himself at Dean’s headquarters unannounced, looking for work, created the Dean blog. It now operates as a kind of real-time, rolling focus group that provides feedback and makes the Dean campaign the most open of any of the major ones.

But the Internet doesn’t simply attract generals; it’s about ground troops, too. Young people who’ve grown up with the Internet have taken to the blogs and the Dean campaign like ducks to water, founding their own network of campus associations, Generation Dean, and drawing hordes of young volunteers to Burlington. The Dean cam-

paign, meanwhile, has done its level best to hire talent (frequently volunteers) from many of the youthful blogs, such as Ezra Klein and Joe Rospars of [NotGeniuses.com](#).

By building and participating in a responsive online community, the Dean campaign enrolled people in its quest and encouraged donations, then wowed the political world by raking in a field-leading \$7.6 million in the second quarter of the year. Now all the other candidates are playing catch-up: Sens. Kerry, John Edwards (D-N.C.) and Bob Graham (D-Fla.) have all launched blogs. It’s the latest rage across the political spectrum; even the Bush-Cheney re-election effort and beleaguered California Gov. Gray Davis’ wife have launched blogs.

In the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, the new technologically enabled communities have put Dean out front in the dash for cash, not to mention in the lead or tied for it in polls in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, California, Maryland—and nationwide. But there is a risk inherent in having a campaign manager who is also, in some ways, a CTO. The Dean campaign in recent weeks has come close to being overwhelmed by the demands of its own process, as the Internet, fund-raising and memberships drives, visibility days, Meetup numbers and massive rallies shift attention from what a Dean presidency would actually do for America to the technical mechanisms of winning. Even though Dean’s most ardent supporters talk about his message, the impression that the campaign neglects developing clear, detailed positions on the issues is a common complaint on the Dean blog, and one at times reinforced by Dean himself.

“Most of my support is not on the issues, which is why I’ve never worried about where I am on the political spectrum,” Dean told reporters on his late August Sleepless Summer Tour. “It isn’t so much what I say, it’s how I say it.”

Whether or not a powerful Internet presence can translate into votes in key states is also an open question. It may, however, be the wrong one. Meetup.com does not seem to be organizing Dean voters; it is assisting the campaign with discovering, filtering and empowering Dean field operatives and volunteers. The Internet is proving to be an ideal medium not only for fund raising but for organizing the organizers and influencing opinion-makers. The more than 10,000 Dean Meetuppers based in California no doubt had some impact—through their relentless flier-ing, tabling, chatting, blogging, stickering and advocating—on catapulting Dean into the polling lead in California, even though he has no paid presence in the state. In fact, although he knew he could draw massive crowds there, Dean skipped California on his tour because he’s so confident in the strength of the existing all-volunteer apparatus there.

“Dean has been the front-runner for months because he was the only one running forward,” says Newberry. “The influentials are not watching TV; they are not even watching cable. They are on the Internet. If you’re not on the Internet you are not an active person. You are a passive person and you will be swept up later.” ■

GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA is a Prospect senior editor.



# Schools of Thought

The liberal-conservative divide on college campuses

BY RICHARD JUST

During her first two years at the University of Pennsylvania, Stephanie Steward became convinced that she was being treated unfairly because of her political views. In her class on diversity and the law, a professor seemed obsessed with the

evils of slavery. Another professor's defense of the estate tax struck her as excessively one-sided. *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, where she worked, seemed to exhibit subtle political bias. Eventually Steward decided that she had taken enough abuse. So last year the junior launched a newspaper of her own, *The Pennsylvania Independent*, and this year she will take the publication biweekly. Starting a newspaper costs money (her budget for this school year will run about \$15,000). Fortunately for Steward, a portion of that money will come from the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), a conservative organization that funds college publications.

Steward's story will sound familiar to anyone who has talked to college conservatives. "It takes a little oppression to really get engaged and involved," says Evan Baehr, a junior at Princeton University, where he is editor in chief of the conservative *Princeton Tory* and president of the College Republicans. Like Steward, Baehr sees himself as an oppressed minority on his campus—and he, too, has turned to national conservative organizations for remedy. The *Tory* received tens of thousands of dollars last year from groups such as the Leadership Institute, the Young America Foundation and the ISI to fund its printing costs and to host speakers such as Jonah Goldberg, George Will and Daniel Flynn, author of *Why the Left Hates America*. Baehr says such speakers are necessary to counterbalance the influence of an overwhelmingly liberal faculty, many of whom he believes exhibit left-wing tendencies in their course materials. Don't conservative college professors also indulge their biases in the classroom? "I'm sure there are equally absurd cases on the other side," Baehr says, mentioning the faculty at Bob Jones University.

Although conservatives currently run the national government and are enjoying an upswing in media influence, conservative activists on campus still draw energy from feeling like a beleaguered minority—and they're not entirely wrong. In last year's American Freshman Survey, conducted annually by the University of California, Los Angeles, 27.8 percent of college freshmen nationwide identified themselves as liberal or far

left while 21.3 percent identified themselves as conservative or far right. It was the first time since 1996 that the percentage of students identifying themselves as liberal or left in the survey decreased; the year before, 29.9 percent had identified themselves as liberal or far left, the most since 1975.

Liberal dominance is more pronounced at elite schools. Dartmouth is widely considered to be the most conservative school in the Ivy League. And yet, according to a voluntary e-mail poll by *The Dartmouth*, the school's student newspaper, 62 percent of students voted for Al Gore in 2000 compared with 23 percent for George W. Bush. At Princeton, generally considered the second-most conservative Ivy, 55 percent voted for Gore compared with 26 percent for Bush, according to a 2000 poll by *The Daily Princetonian* (of which I was then editor in chief). At the University of Pennsylvania, probably the third-most conservative Ivy, 67 percent chose Gore while 20 percent chose Bush, according to *The Daily Pennsylvanian*.

IF THESE BROAD MEASUREMENTS—LIBERAL VERSUS conservative, Gore voter versus Bush voter—were the only campus trends that mattered to the future health of progressive politics, liberals would be in reasonably strong shape. But unfortunately for progressives, college politics are more complex. I recently spoke to about 30 student leaders at universities throughout the country. Their perspectives on campus activism varied from school to school, but most agreed that though the right is still a minority on many campuses, it is undoubtedly an energized one. Like Steward and Baehr, conservatives are often fueled by two forces: their own sense of righteous indignation at professors, administrators and peers whom they believe have made college campuses inhospitable territory for conservative ideas; and the availability of funding from outside organizations, which allows them to channel this indignation into publications, speaker series—and, they hope, converts.

The siege mentality of campus conservatives and the substantial financial support they receive from outside groups have not escaped media notice. In May, *The New*



*York Times Magazine* published a story about the rise of “hip” conservatives at Bucknell University. *The Economist* followed with a shorter piece in July on the growth of College Republicans, which has tripled its national membership in the last three years. “The leftists who seized control of the universities in the 1960s have imposed their world-view on the young with awesome enthusiasm, bowdlerising textbooks of anything that might be considered sexist or racist, imposing draconian speech codes and inventing pseudo-subjects such as women’s studies,” *The Economist* wrote, offering a concise illustration of the current conservative mind-set on many campuses. As a student from Pennsylvania State University told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* while attending a Young America Foundation conference in Washington this summer, “Our group is much smaller than the college Democrats, but at least we are making our voices known.”

Campus conservatives have made the most of their self-conception as an oppressed minority. Their insurgency is just a natural “reaction against the professors and the administration, which tend to be liberal,” says Dan Gomez, chairman of Penn’s College Republicans. Alicia Washington, president of Yale University’s College Democrats, agrees. Yale conservatives, she says, “knock a lot louder be-

instance, displays numerous student groups running the gamut from liberal to radical: the Environmental Action Committee; AIDS Education and Outreach; the Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgendered Supporters Alliance; the Black Students Association; the Black Men’s Forum; the Coalition Against Sexual Violence; the Coalition for Drug Policy Reform; the Harvard-Radcliffe Women’s Leadership Project; Youth at Harvard Against Handgun Violence; Students for Choice; Amnesty International; the Initiative for Peace and Justice and so on. The conservative counterparts are much fewer in number. This phenomenon exists at many schools, and on some campuses, student leaders say, the proliferation of liberal groups can lead to divisions in the progressive community.

It’s not simply the *number* of organizations that matters—the ideological range of progressive groups tends to be much wider than those on the right. That fragmentation can be healthy, of course—what is college about, if not debating ideas?—but it can also create bitter and disabling divisions, particularly at schools with strong cultures of radicalism. Ethan Ris, president of Brown University’s College Democrats, says that this past spring the Young Communist League took over efforts to organize protests against the war in Iraq. “We would show

## Many student leaders say the proliferation of liberal groups on some college campuses can lead to divisions in the progressive community.

cause there are so few of them.” And if conservatives find that knocking louder helps them generate publicity, well, that’s part of the point.

By contrast, campus progressives, though still more numerous, have two big problems: funding and fragmentation. Yoni Applebaum, who led the Columbia University organization that dispenses funding to student groups and worked with the nonpartisan Columbia Political Union (CPU), said the disparity was noticeable. “It was far easier for us at the CPU to locate external sources of funding to bring conservative speakers to campus than it was to locate sources of funding to bring Democratic speakers to campus,” he says. The funding gap manifests itself in more subtle ways, too. “The liberal magazines don’t look anywhere near as nice as the conservative magazines,” says Emily Regan Wills, a senior at Yale and a leader of the school’s Women’s Center. Zac Frank, president of Columbia’s College Democrats, marvels at the outside support available to conservative groups. “The national network they have is just astounding,” he says. That national network serves as a pipeline for young conservatives, and it has churned out its share of success stories: Ralph Reed, Grover Norquist and, most famously, Karl Rove all held national positions in the College Republicans organization.

THE NUMBER OF PROGRESSIVE CAMPUS GROUPS OFTEN dwarfs the number of conservative organizations, but that is both a strength and a weakness. Harvard’s Web site, for

up to these meetings and be shouted down and called idiots .... My members would show up and have such a terrible time, they’d never want to go again.” Yale’s Wills—who is herself no centrist; she voted for Gore only because she lived in the swing state of Pennsylvania and would have voted for Ralph Nader elsewhere—says the progressive community often ends up being dominated by its most extreme voices. “I am shocked often by what I am called moderate for saying,” she says. “And ‘moderate’ in the activist community is a dirty word.” Describing some activists as “hard-line” and “off-putting,” she adds, “People who get committed to Yale activism often end up being very far to the left.”

At Columbia, a school with a long tradition of radicalism, liberal students say that the vocal student chapter of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) has a chilling effect on more mainstream progressive activism. “I’ve met freshmen who’ve been wary of joining a political group because what they see on campus are these far-left groups who are not their cup of tea,” says Samir Arora, who just graduated from Columbia and was president of the CPU. Frank, of the College Democrats, says, “People see any identification with progressive issues as being, ‘Oh, that’s the ISO again.’”

Progressive students engaged in narrowly focused organizations may ignore liberal electoral politics. “Sometimes it’s difficult to work with single-issue groups,” says Gerard McGeary, president of Harvard’s College Democrats. Alicia Washington of Yale agrees that the strength of iden-



tity groups “in some ways does kind of detract.” But other campus liberal leaders see identity groups as valuable gateways to political awareness for students who might otherwise remain on the sidelines. “It’s a big group of people to get our message out to,” says Rich Eisenberg, president of Penn’s College Democrats.

Another problem for the liberal side is durability. Single-issue liberal organizations often ride on the energy of a handful of students and may not outlive their graduations. Changes in world events may also make narrowly defined groups obsolete, scattering to the wind the political energy they briefly harnessed. Groups that sprang up to oppose the Iraq War this past spring are a prime example. “Things form as news forms, and then they die as news dies,” Lucretia Fernandez, press secretary of Indiana University’s College Republicans, says of some progressive groups on her campus.

Still, campus conservatives say that the sheer number of liberal groups gives progressives more opportunities to lure students to campus activism. “Any sort of liberal issue has a group at Penn, as opposed to the conservatives, who, as of now, have us,” says Gomez of Penn’s College Republicans. With more groups, he says, “you can mobilize so many more people, even though they may not be united by a common leadership.” As a result, conservatives at Penn and Princeton say they are trying to emulate the left by encouraging the formation of new right-of-center political groups more narrowly tailored around specific issues.



Dress Right: The Young Republicans' July 2003 National Convention

A BIGGER NEMESIS FOR BOTH GROUPS IS A FAMILIAR one: apathy. Getting the message out about political issues is a particular challenge when great swaths of the student body aren't listening. To have a conversation with current college students about political activism, it's practically a precondition to acknowledge that many students simply don't care about the great debates of our time, or don't think that political engagement is worth the trouble. There is, of course, some sample bias at work here: It makes sense that the average activist would view his or her peers as politically apathetic, just as the typical cellist would probably view other students as insufficiently interested in attending orchestra concerts. And yet it is impossible to avoid the fact that conversations about politics at colleges big and small, liberal and conservative, urban and rural, private and public invariably turn toward the fact that “the majority of students are apathetic,” as Josh Fisher of the Bucknell Caucus for Economic Justice put it in speaking about his campus. Asked whether students at Bucknell are generally left or right of center, he says he

doesn't know. “I couldn't say definitively because most people avoid topics of conversation like that,” he says. “It's sort of an anti-intellectual environment.” Katerina Seligmann of Columbia's Amnesty International chapter acknowledges that most of her peers are politically left of center. But, she adds, “There's a difference between people being liberals and people being activists.”

Cutting through this apathy is the greatest challenge faced by campus activists, left and right—and possibly the one idea that unites the two sides. “When we're registering people by ourselves, we get 10 people per hour,” says Eisenberg of Penn's College Democrats. “When we're registering with the College Republicans, we get 50 people an hour.” Gomez, his Penn counterpart on the right, says that debates between the two groups—which take place once or

twice a year—draw “the most participation of any one event that either of us do.”

Humor is another way to coax students out of apathy, and a little effort goes a long way. Conservatives have been out in front on this one, probably because it's easier to poke fun at the establishment when you perceive yourself as being outside it. *The New York Times Magazine* documented how Bucknell conservatives have made a rite of annually penning something called “Penis Monologues,” a response to the feminist play *The Vagina Monologues*, popular on many campuses. The stunt generates outrage and publicity, which is exactly what conservative students want.

Liberals may be watching and learning. Shortly after this year's State of the Union address, Peter Hackeman, opinions editor of *The Bucknellian*, the student newspaper, wrote a satirical draft of Bush's speech that wasn't bad. “Our intelligence sources tell us that Saddam has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production,” he wrote, “but they



were actually to be used for those low-tech phones with string connecting two aluminum cans... Saddam Hussein has not credibly explained these activities. He clearly has much to hide. Just what are these string-and-can phones to be used for? If this is not evil, then evil has no meaning." Not as outrageous as the "Penis Monologues," to be sure, but give Bucknell's liberals points for effort.

The Iraq War was fertile ground for campus activism on both sides of the political spectrum. But most students agree that national politics in the last two years has moved into territory where campus conservatives feel more comfortable than their liberal peers. "It became a lot easier to be a conservative at college after September 11," says Angel Rivera, president of Indiana University's College Republicans. Following the terrorist attacks, groups with names such as the Princeton Committee Against Terrorism and Columbia's Students United for America sprang up. Though many of these groups had bipartisan memberships, they clearly leaned right.

Many see this trend not as evidence that undergraduates have converted to neoconservatism en masse but rather as a manifestation of how contemporary college students feel about institutions—such as the military—that were largely opposed by their parents. In the most recent nationwide UCLA survey, 45 percent of students agreed "strongly" or "somewhat" with the idea of increasing military spending. In 1993, that number was 21.4 percent. Supporters of the Iraq War understood this situation. At Columbia, for instance, the College Republicans chapter was careful to advertise its rally as a "pro-troops" event rather than a "pro-war" one, explained Dennis Schmelzer, the organization's executive director. "The war in Iraq has been a great issue for us," says the group's president, Ganesh Betanabhatla.

A debate raged at the school over whether to bring the ROTC back to campus. And some liberals—revealing, perhaps, the inclinations of their generation—have found it difficult to dismiss the arguments of their more conservative peers. Dina Schorr, a founder of Toward Reconciliation, a Columbia group that advocates peaceful resolutions to international conflicts, struggled with the question of whether to sign a petition advocating the ROTC's return. "If all of these liberal campuses don't have ROTC," she explained, "then how can you expect the military to change?" In the end, she signed.

On social issues, however, college students remain generally liberal. "Social issues [are] really our best shot among young, educated kids," says Owen Conroy, president of Princeton's College Democrats. Whatever else characterizes today's college students, this is surely the Tolerant Generation. The percentage of students supporting gay rights has consistently grown in UCLA's survey in recent years. Last year a record high of 59.3 percent supported gay marriage while a record low of 24.8 percent favored laws limiting homosexual rights. It is well documented that students are growing more ambivalent about ever having an abortion or personally approving of one, yet recently a majority still favored

abortion rights. And 39.7 percent support legalizing marijuana, up from 16.7 percent in 1989. "It's definitely harder to sell them on socially conservative ideas," says Gomez of Republican efforts to enlist Penn students.

Whatever frustrations Gomez has experienced haven't sapped his sense of mission. Last year, to spark interest in their group, Republicans put up signs around campus that asked, "What Would Reagan Do?" When many were torn down—as campus posters often are—Gomez took it as a sign of anti-conservative bias. "If there were posters saying, 'What Would Carter Do?' they wouldn't have gotten torn down," he says. The deeply held belief that they are being persecuted on college campuses may make some conservatives seem a little paranoid. But it may also be strengthening their resolve.

COLLEGE LIBERALS CONFRONT A PARADOX: THEIR PARENTS won many aspects of the battle for campuses some decades ago—freer sexuality, affirmative action, greater curricular and cultural diversity. Liberals of that generation came to dominate faculties, notably in the liberal arts. Today it's conservatives who feel like the opposition, and it's a lot easier to be outraged, dogmatic and zealously energized if you're not in charge.

But it's not clear that liberals *are* completely in charge. It's true that professors in departments like English, sociology and women's studies are disproportionately left of center, but in the parts of universities that lead directly to real power—business schools, law faculties, economics departments—the opposite is often true. Diversity of ideological views is, of course, healthy. When conservatives complain that their sociology professors teach from a liberal vantage point, liberals can retort that it's good for conservatives to challenge themselves by studying with liberal sociologists—just as it's good for liberals to challenge themselves by taking economics courses with market fundamentalists.

To spur activism, liberals have no shortage of topics to tap. The anti-sweatshop movement, which crested on campuses about four years ago, placed progressive activists in direct confrontation with their school administrations and also garnered sympathy from large portions of normally apathetic student bodies. Campaigns for higher wages for the lowest-paid workers at colleges have achieved similar results.

There are any number of other issues—from the death grip of commercialized athletic departments on university decision making to the outrageous use of federal work-study money to fund menial campus jobs rather than meaningful service opportunities—that are ripe for exploration by thoughtful, progressive undergrads. When campus liberals have enjoyed success and garnered publicity in recent years, they have carved out creative positions on issues that have allowed them to challenge both the institutions where they study and the larger society. Their victories have suggested that beneath the apathy, idealism is still the natural condition of youth. ■

RICHARD JUST is the Prospect's online editor.



# A CONTRACT WITH AMERICA'S YOUTH

NEITHER MAJOR POLITICAL PARTY IN THE UNITED STATES PAYS ENOUGH ATTENTION TO THE YOUNG. THIS HAS to change. In the course of writing and editing this special report, we at the *Prospect* thought it worthwhile to put down on one page the essential needs of the next generation and what is required of the political system to enhance the chances that our youth will fully participate in American life. We see this contract as something of a first stab at what is needed. Our readers undoubtedly will have other thoughts and suggestions. Please send any ideas to [youthcontract@prospect.org](mailto:youthcontract@prospect.org) and we will share as many as we can on our Web site at [www.prospect.org](http://www.prospect.org).

1. **Secure America.** America needs to show resolve in the face of terrorism, and to do so as part of a global community so that our young men and women stationed abroad are emissaries of democratic values, not unwelcome invaders. America's foreign policy cannot be separated from the lives of younger Americans, for it is young men and women who fight and die in war.
2. **Make college affordable again.** Tuitions have soared, scholarships have given way to loans and federal Pell Grants have been frozen. Community-college opportunities also need to be expanded to give young people without four-year degrees the chance to enter professions and earn decent incomes.
3. **Improve economic opportunities for young people without college degrees.** Enable people in low-paid jobs to get on paraprofessional and professional career ladders. Help young workers to upgrade skills and earnings.
4. **Help young people become stakeholders.** Stakeholder accounts, provided to all Americans at birth, would grow as children do; the accounts could subsidize college tuition, first-time homeownership and job retraining. Restoring the tax on large estates could fund these accounts.
5. **Begin nest eggs for retirement.** The stakeholder accounts could help here, as could reforming pension systems so that pensions and 401(k)s are fully portable and guaranteed against Enron-style looting. Social Security should be kept financially strong, thereby protecting the compact that knits one generation to another.
6. **Leave no school behind.** Improving the quality of poor public schools in America's large cities and rural areas would help equalize life chances for children from poorer families. Teach for America's funding must be restored.
7. **Provide service opportunities for young people.** Expanding AmeriCorps and other service programs would allow young adults to put their idealism into practice while letting them learn firsthand about the problems facing the country.
8. **Make parenthood economically possible.** The absence of high-quality child care and early childhood education often forces young parents to choose between their careers and their children.

The dilemma is even more acute for poorer mothers who are torn between the demands of a harsh welfare system and the new rules of high-stakes school testing. Young families need both paid parental leave and high-quality child care.

9. **Promote homeownership for younger Americans.** With housing costs rising and incomes stagnant, fewer young Americans are able to become homeowners (except with support from their parents). All young Americans deserve a chance at homeownership, including those without affluent families. Government needs to support first-time homeowners.
10. **Legislate universal health insurance, starting with under-25-year-olds.** Many jobs open to young Americans have inadequate health coverage, or none at all. The first step toward universal insurance is coverage for everyone under 25. All newborns should get a Medicare card.
11. **Pass on a healthy economy.** Three years ago the federal budget was in surplus and the economy was at full employment. Today, after three huge tax cuts, deficits are in the half-trillion-dollar range. Young Americans will pay these bills in the form of lower economic growth and living standards, higher taxes and reduced public services. We need to restore fiscal discipline and tax equity.
12. **Pass along a cleaner environment.** We are stewards of the environment for generations to come. Government policy has lately reversed three decades of progress toward cleaner air and water. We need to get back on the path toward a clean economy and a better stewardship of the planet.
13. **Broaden American democracy for the next generation.** Encourage younger voters to participate by getting big money out of politics and by eliminating obstacles to voting. We need same-day registration, election day as a holiday, experimentation with online voting and systems that encourage participation (such as instant-runoff voting).
14. **Learn tolerance from the young.** This is the most tolerant generation in American history. We need to enact legislation recognizing domestic partnerships, preventing hate crimes, restoring rights to immigrants and getting rid of laws like the so-called PATRIOT Act that invite censorship, invasion of privacy and a denial of our liberties. ■



# Daughters of the Revolution

Today's young women have profited from feminism, but will they defend it?

BY NOY THRUPKAEW

"I would not call myself a feminist," says Natalie, a University of Michigan junior. "I'm experiencing a lot of the advantages that feminists worked to achieve, and I'm thankful. ... But I don't know that women are still that much uneven from men,

especially in the workplace." Told that on average a woman today makes only 76 cents to a man's dollar, Natalie is shocked. "I don't understand how that could be fair or even possible," she says.

Young women in the United States today do not seem to be opposed to feminism, as the Feminist Majority Foundation (FM) has defined it on the back of its business cards ("the policy, practice or advocacy of political, economic and social equality for women"), so much as they are put off by a bra-burning, hairy-legged image of the feminism of their mothers' generation. The daughters have reaped many benefits from the feminist revolution of the 1960s and '70s, the "Second Wave" of the U.S. women's movement. (The "First Wave" is associated with the women's suffrage movement.) Young women today have greater access to reproductive health services, greater opportunities in the workplace and more lifestyle choices, including the freedom to gleefully take up lipstick and miniskirts without conceding anything to the patriarchy. This is a generation that feels equally entitled to stay single, marry or cohabit, and with same-sex, opposite-sex or varying partners. Perhaps as a result, a do-it-yourself ethos permeates many young women's lives, and they have tended to shy away from group affiliations of all types.

That individualism is, in part, a healthy thing. But it also has a dark side: The reluctance to work together as a constituency—or to fully engage in electoral politics—may lessen this generation's ability to resist attacks on the freedoms it now enjoys. The American right has been working hard to overturn reproductive choice, roll back recent gains on gay rights and push "abstinence-only" policies on everything from sex education to funding for international health programs. And the Bush administration, for the most part, has signed on to this agenda. The president has also moved against overtime-pay and family-leave laws, steps that could strongly affect young women juggling work and family responsibilities. After years of helping ourselves to a full buffet of life choices, we may one day find the spread sadly diminished—and on the table a sign telling us to get back into the kitchen.

Feminist activists say the current political moment is pivotal, a crossroads for young women and for feminism.

Battling conservatives and fighting accusations of their own movement's stagnation and irrelevance, the organizations started by Second Wave feminists hope to draw young women into the movement and its leadership. The FM and the National Organization for Women have launched campus campaigns, held conferences for young women and pushed to improve women's health services on campus. Alarmed by news that only 44 percent of women under 31 voted in the last election, compared with 66 percent of women 31 and older, they've also launched voter-education and -registration drives.

And a number of young feminists have emerged. They are planning a massive abortion-rights march to take place in Washington next year, and their campus performances of *The Vagina Monologues* have raised money for Afghan women. Says Whitney Cabey, a recent Spelman College graduate and new FM campus organizer, "Calling myself a feminist is basically like calling myself my own name."

But there are more young women who, like Natalie, are ambivalent about joining in.

PART OF THE CHALLENGE MAY BE FEMINISM'S OWN SUCCESSES. To many young women today, their lives have little to do with the oppressions faced by their mothers' generation. Compared with young women in 1975, today's 25-to-34-year-olds are, on average, better educated and more likely to be employed. They are also more likely to delay marriage and childbearing, decisions associated with greater family stability and higher incomes. Those under 25 have come of age in a time of considerable freedom of sexual identity and "girl power," which, despite its current status as a marketing cliché, has had a positive impact on young women's attitudes toward athletic, social and intellectual prowess.

So has feminism outlived its usefulness? Certainly not, says Jane Mansbridge, a professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government who's writing a book titled *Everyday Feminism*. "We've gotten rid of a ton of overt discrimination," Mansbridge says, "but there's tons of structural discrimination still remaining." That kind of sex discrimination—in workplace policies and in the general culture's assumptions about job productivity, family roles



and caregiving responsibilities—has particularly affected young women, for even more than their mothers 25 years ago, today's young women are juggling work, family and education demands simultaneously.

For example, nearly 64 percent of young, married women with children worked in some capacity in 2000, compared with only 38 percent of women in the same category in 1975. With their higher education levels and increased workforce participation, today's young women between 25 and 34 are "truly squeezed between the time and money demands of simultaneously investing in education, finding and climbing the first rungs of the career ladder, acquiring a life partner, establishing a home, and having and caring for children," say the editors of the demographic study *The American Woman 2003-2004*. "No other age group bears such a complex burden."

YOUNG WOMEN WHO THINK WE LIVE IN A POSTFEMINIST era have often led fairly privileged lives, says Amy Richards, co-author of *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* and co-founder of the Third Wave Foundation, an organization of young feminists. Feminism's past successes haven't much diminished the burdens on the country's least privileged women, Richards says. Indeed, the wage gap between unmarried mothers with less than a high-school education and married women who are college graduates has *grown* over the last 25 years. In 1975 the poorer group made more than 20 percent the wage of the college grads; in 2000 its members made only 17 percent. Lack of education translates into the kind of low-wage work that keeps people at the bottom. And more than a third of young Latinas have less than a high-school



Catching the Third Wave

Young mothers have responded to these multiple demands by tailoring their work lives—working flexible schedules or part-time, leaving the workforce temporarily or alternating work periods with a partner, if they have one. Such strategies allow them the time to be the primary caregiver, a role still largely filled by women, but they pay a price. Fewer work years can translate into lower Social Security and retirement benefits for women; part-time work may eliminate health and retirement benefits entirely. And all of the above take a toll on women's opportunities for advancement. "Those young women who say they might not need feminism—they need to look at their lives in the future," says Mansbridge. "They'll need it later, with additional job, family and partnership pressures."

diploma—a troubling statistic for the country's largest growing minority group. As for African-American women, they have the highest work-participation rate of any group of women but are disproportionately in lower-wage occupations. They make up 7.1 percent of employed 25-to-34-year-olds but only 5.7 percent of those holding executive, administrative or managerial positions.

Poor women and women of color in the current generation face continuing inequality, and both they and more privileged women of the same age face a difficult time-money crunch. Feminism's work, particularly for young women, is clearly incomplete. It's also gotten harder. Due to an increase in life expectancies and low child-bearing rates, the U.S. population is steadily aging. In 2000, for the



first time ever, more than half the American population consisted of adults aged 35 and older. Women under 25 now represent a much smaller percentage of the population than was true in their mothers' day. "As a result," say the editors of *The American Woman*, "the younger adults who traditionally have dominated the adult population are losing 'market share,' with predictable effects on their political, cultural, and economic impact."

In light of these challenges, young women's ambivalence toward feminism—a movement that ostensibly recognizes and fights for their needs—may seem surprising. But young women haven't missed the backlash against the feminist movement: the conservative messages of pundits like Ann Coulter and Phyllis Schlafly, who make lucrative careers for themselves out of telling other women to stay at home; the numerous articles and books on eligible-bachelor shortages, shriveled ovaries and the dangers of day care; the baby-scare tomes such as Sylvia Ann Hewlett's *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*. They all imply that "it must be all that equality that's causing all that pain," as Susan Faludi put it in *Backlash*. "The women's movement, ... we are told time and again, has proved women's own worst enemy."

has taken a decidedly nontraditional form, it isn't because they oppose feminism's traditional political positions. "Third Wave" feminism, however, is playful. It's tuned in to pop culture. It's ironic. Third Wave activists have reclaimed stereotypically feminine toys—knitting, the color pink and Barbie dolls, for instance—from the Second Wave trash heap. They've set out to strip formerly taboo words of their misogynistic trappings: The word "girl" has made a comeback; magazines are called *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture* and *Bust: For Women Who Have Something to Get Off Their Chests*; Inga Muscio penned a book praising female anatomy and titled it *Cunt: A Declaration of Independence*. Even more than the Second Wave, the Third Wave has created feminist porn, feminist hip-hop and feminist spoken-word poetry in its efforts to explore the convergence of politics and art.

Some critics have charged that young feminists today are dabbling in identity politics and nail polish instead of working toward legislative change. But many young feminists seem to be active in other social movements—doing environmental, racial-justice, anti-death penalty and/or anti-globalization work—and they believe that in the process they are disbursing feminist ideas. It's an approach that

### **"Third Wave" activists have reclaimed stereotypically feminine toys—knitting, the color pink and Barbie dolls—from the Second Wave trash heap.**

Not all the blame can be laid at the feet of feminism's foes, though. Even self-identified feminists among the younger generation confess to ambivalence about the movement. Some believe that the Second Wave was uninterested or even hostile to motherhood. One young feminist, who asked to remain unnamed, said that when she had children, she felt as if feminism had "abandoned" her. "Motherhood was left out of traditional feminism," she said. "I think the Second Wave of feminism had a necessary push against traditional gender roles in order to get equality in the workplace. And I'm really thankful for that. But in that push, motherhood was pushed against."

In general, this generation seems to have contradictory views on women's issues. On abortion, for example, the number of American adults who identify themselves as "pro-life" has increased as this younger generation has entered the polling sample. (According to Gallup Polls, 45 percent called themselves "pro-life" in 2000, up from 33 percent in 1995.) And the number identifying themselves as being in favor of abortion rights has decreased (from 56 percent to 47 percent). But the number of Americans who say the procedure should remain legal—either across the board or under certain circumstances—holds steady at near 80 percent. Young women appear to be more willing than their mothers' generation to explore the issue's complexities and their own misgivings, but they are not falling in line with conservative pressure to roll back *Roe v. Wade*.

So if young women aren't flocking to the women's movement, it isn't because they are against it. And if the activism of those who do consider themselves feminists

may well reach and reflect a more diverse population than Second Wave feminism, which has so often been criticized for being primarily a middle-class, white women's cause.

YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN HAVE "INTERNALIZED FEMINISM too much, thankfully, to swing too far from it," says Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, who is writing a book titled *The F Word: How Women Are Redefining Sex, Power and Politics in America*. But she also poses an important question: Do young women realize that the opportunities to be who we want to be, sexually and in other ways, and the self-sufficiency to enjoy the ironies of pop culture were won by political action—and may have to be defended that way? "If we don't engage electorally," Rowe-Finkbeiner asks, "will we [remain] able to create our own identities?"

There are reasons to suspect that young women are figuring this out. Even Natalie, though still put off by unpleasant associations with the word "feminism," has signed up to take a women's studies class this fall. "As a woman," she says, "I just want to know where some of these rights have come from."

And who knows? If feminism faces a fight, perhaps at the center of those riding to its rescue will be its greatest beneficiaries, the young women who may be ambivalent, dismissive or unaware of the movement now but who have grown up enjoying its gains—and knowing the power of taking a "bad word" and making it one's own. ■

NOY THRUPKAEW is a Prospect contributing editor and a fellow at the Pew International Journalism Program.



# The Young and the Jobless

Why those new to the workforce stand to lose the most

BY JARED BERNSTEIN

It's not easy being young today. While America moves through an economic recovery, young workers are being left behind. And that's largely because, since the recovery officially began in November 2001, employment is down by more

than a million. Of the 10 economic expansions since World War II, this is the first in which jobs have taken so long to appear. And among those hurting the most, in terms of employment and wages, are young people in the early stages of their careers. This is true among low-wage earners, who commonly suffer when the economy slows down. But it's also true among young, white-collar adults, who have been relatively immune to other slowdowns.

Why does this matter? Research shows that the greatest gains in a young person's earnings tend to occur at the start of his or her career. These early gains also have a major impact on long-term earnings, and thus set the stage for the future economic prospects of those starting out today. So today's high unemployment and large number of job losses, coupled with a consequent slower wage growth, could cause long-term damage to the upward mobility of today's youth years down the road.

A unique and troubling aspect of the weak job market is its impact on young college-educated job seekers. In the boom years of the 1990s, their employment rates—the share of young college grads with jobs, a good indicator of the overall demand labor—were close to 90 percent. These were the days when recruiters for information-technology and financial firms were practically hiding behind trees on college campuses, ready to abscond with the first computer-science major who happened by. College graduates' wages also rose steeply, at about 3 percent per year, as the economy expanded and unemployment dropped between 1996 and 2001.

Then the recession hit, and it was much more damaging to the job market for young college grads than for any other

job market in recent history. In the much deeper recession of the early 1980s, the employment rates of young college graduates, ages 25–35, were essentially unchanged, staying around 85 percent before starting to climb in the latter half of the '80s. In the last few years, by contrast, the employment rates of young college grads have fallen sharply to historically low levels, from around 88 percent in 2000 to 84 percent in mid-2003. A front-page story in *The New York Times* in May carried the headline “College Graduates Lower Sights in Today's Stagnant Job Market”; the article's Web abstract, meanwhile, pointed out: “The nation's class of 2003 ... is graduating into the nation's worst hiring slump in 20 years. ... Only about 15 percent will have jobs awaiting them, half the percentage that did a few springs ago ... leaving about six out of ten seniors without long-term plans.” Their real wages reversed course, too, dropping 1.5 percent in 2002.

Why such a shortage of jobs for newly minted grads, most of whom presumably carry the required skills for entry into the new economy? The reason has to do with the nature of this downturn. The 1990s boom was partly driven by the dot-com bubble, which in turn inflated an asset bubble in the financial markets. Those were the very sectors that were aggressively hiring these grads a few short years ago. When those collapsed, so did the flourishing economy and, particularly, opportunities for young college grads. Now both sectors have contracted significantly. Manufacturing is still the industry with the biggest losses since the recession hit; employment there is down by 14 percent. But information technology is right behind, down 12 percent. Adding

**LABOR MARKET INDICATORS FOR 16–24-YEAR-OLDS (OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL), BY RACE/ETHNICITY**

		Unemployment rates		Employment rates	
		Less than HS	HS	Less than HS	HS
All	1995	22%	12%	50%	73%
	2000	17	10	56	76
	2002	20	13	52	72
White	1995	19	10	55	77
	2000	15	7	59	80
	2002	19	11	55	76
African American	1995	45	23	27	59
	2000	33	19	37	62
	2002	38	23	34	57
Hispanic	1995	17	13	52	66
	2000	12	9	60	75
	2002	16	12	59	71

Source: Author's analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data, 1995–2000



to the problem is the outsourcing of IT jobs overseas. In the 1990s, policy-makers often argued that advanced computer skills would inoculate college-educated young workers from the vicissitudes of globalization, and those workers' experience in the late 1990s certainly seemed to reflect that reality. But the events that started this decade revealed that IT was neither recession-proof nor insulated from global pressures to cut costs and trim margins.

What about those with less marketable skills? Here the focus is on 16–24 year olds who are no longer in school, either because they dropped out or completed high school. During the 1990s boom, many of these young workers made considerable gains. The turnaround from the first part of the decade was an important development because the rhetoric among many economists at the time was that the new economy was permanently inhospitable to the non-college educated. But when unemployment sank low enough and the competition for labor rose, it turned out that many poorly educated youth and minorities could actually find jobs with rising wages.

In 1995 (see table on previous page), when things started really heating up, the unemployment rate of those 16–24 was 22 percent for dropouts and 12 percent for high-school grads. Five years later, those rates were 17 percent and 10

is an important sector for non-college-educated young workers, and employment there is down by 400,000 (–3 percent) since the recession began, with half of those losses occurring in the recovery, a clear sign that what consumption has occurred has been too weak to create new jobs.

These wage and employment trends can have profound, long-term implications for the economic lives of young people because they set the foundation for a lifetime's earnings. Economists reference the “age-wage” profile—the path that a person's earnings or income take over his or her lifetime. The conventional profile starts out with a fairly steep slope, as people move through their first few jobs, usually recording some pretty big gains, at least in percentage terms. A young person who goes from his or her first minimum-wage job to his or her first real job out of college can easily experience an hourly wage increase of greater than 100 percent. Later, income gains tend to moderate.

But if a young person starts out at a time like this, when the labor demand is weak, it can have a lasting negative impact on his or her earning power. Historical data on median family incomes shows that those young families who started out in robust times, when unemployment was persistently low, enjoyed better income trajectories throughout their prime earning years compared with those who

## **If a young person enters the job market now, when the labor demand is weak, it can have a lasting negative impact on his or her earning power.**

percent, respectively, with the largest gains found among the least skilled. For young African Americans in 1995, unemployment was a depression-level 45 percent for dropouts and 23 percent for high-school grads. In 2000 these rates fell to 33 percent and 19 percent, respectively. The numbers are obviously alarmingly high, especially in the best of times, but the trends are truly impressive. While the national unemployment rate fell less than 2 percentage points, from 5.6 percent to 4 percent, the rate for one of the most disadvantaged groups in our society—young, black dropouts—fell 12 points.

The recession, however, put an end to all that. Economist Andrew Sum and his colleagues write, “The onset of the national recession in early 2001 brought these labor market gains for young adults to an immediate halt, and their labor market problems have risen to a considerably greater degree than any other age group in society.” For the most part, jobless rates sprang back to where they had been, if not worse. The unemployment rates of young whites and Hispanics are nearly back to their 1995 levels; employment rates have done only slightly better for minorities.

What explains the falloff? Again, it's the broad-based nature of the recession and the protracted manner of the weak recovery. While the recession was widely advertised as mild in historical terms, in some ways it has been uniquely harsh. Yes, consumption held up, but it's been isolated within a few sectors, such as housing and health care. One would be hard pressed to find an industry, occupation or region of the country that wasn't touched by the downturn. Retail trade

started out in leaner times. For example, young families starting out in the 1950s, when unemployment averaged below 5 percent, experienced real median income gains of more than 50 percent, both in their early and middle years. As these families passed through their prime earning years, ages 25–54, their real family income grew by 140 percent. Similarly, the income of young families starting out in the 1960s—another period of low unemployment, averaging 4.8 percent—grew 60 percent in their early years, and just about doubled through their prime years (25–54). By contrast, those young families whose misfortune it was to get started in the stagnant 1980s—average unemployment rate: 7 percent—gained only 27 percent in their first 10 years (25–34), and 25 percent in their next 10 years. Instead of doubling throughout their prime years, their income grew by 59 percent.

The same dynamic was at play in the 1990s, at least early on. The beginning of the decade looked much like the 1980s. The income of young families actually fell slightly between 1989 and 1995. There was some relief in the middle of the decade, though, when labor markets began to heat up, productivity accelerated and the income of young families began to grow. Between 1995 and 2000, the real median family income of young people grew 2.3 percent per year in real terms. That's well behind the 1949–69 rate of 3.4 percent per year, but it far surpasses the stagnation of the 1980s and early 1990s. Yet as soon as unemployment started rising, young workers were again immediately vulnerable. By 2001, when unemployment rose from 4 percent to



4.8 percent (still below what many economists consider full employment), young families' median income fell by 1 percent. In fact, a simple analysis of the relationship between real median income and unemployment (see figure below) reveals an unmistakable negative pattern, with the biggest unemployment-induced income losses among the youngest families and the damage getting smaller as families age.

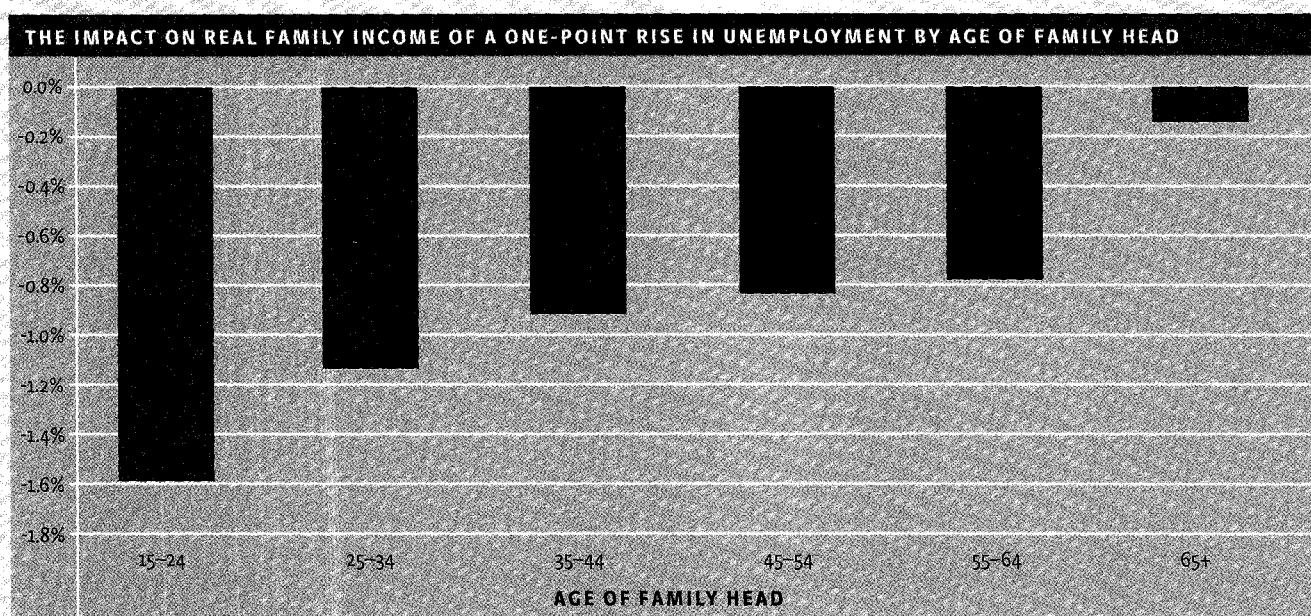
Given the lasting damage weak labor markets can have on the young, the central question is whether we will pull out of this jobless recovery and get back to strong, late 1990s-style growth anytime soon. The answer is starting to look like "yes" and "no," i.e., job creation will soon return but full employment won't.

The excess capacity in IT that was built up at the end of the boom seems to have been absorbed, and firms are beginning to invest again. However, part of the IT boom—

labor market is tight, employers will share the benefits of faster productivity growth with even their lowest-wage workers. Unfortunately, the opposite is true as well.

The problem for these workers is that we won't be looking at tight labor markets for a while, maybe a long while. Even the most optimistic forecasts show unemployment stuck near 6 percent for the rest of this year, and declining only slightly by the end of 2004. That won't do it for those seeking decent low-end jobs. The lesson of the last boom is that for young, non-college-educated workers to get a leg up, the labor market needs to be at full employment, with the jobless rate closer to 4 percent than to 5 percent.

There are some policy initiatives that will help younger, less-skilled workers. A higher minimum wage helps to lift the wage floor for the lowest paid, and moderate increases have no job-loss effects. Young adults, especially young



Source: Author's analysis of Census Bureau data

and most of it in equity markets—was driven by pure hype and speculation, which hopefully won't return. That means that while computer and financial firms will soon be hiring young college grads again, don't expect to see them wined, dined and courted with inflated salary offers. (The recent acceleration of overseas outsourcing of white-collar jobs will also dampen demand for domestic workers, though the magnitude of the problem is as yet uncertain.)

Meanwhile, there will be no shortage of low-wage jobs for less advantaged young workers once the recovery picks up speed. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that seven out of the 10 occupations expected to add the most jobs over the next decade are low-wage, low-skill jobs: food preparation, customer service, retail sales, cashiers, clerks, security guards and waitpersons. The open question is what the quality of these jobs will be. That is, what will they pay, and will they offer any fringes? As we saw in the late 1990s, these jobs got a lot better when unemployment was extremely low and employers had to compete. For the first time in decades, not only did real wages rise in these occupations, they started to offer health care as well. When the

women, tend to earn at or near the minimum. At this point it's been six years since the last increase (to \$5.15). That's the second-longest stretch without a raise since the Reagan years. Health care is too important for young workers and their families to leave to the market. I noted that the late 1990s led to an increase in low-wage jobs with health coverage, but even at the peak, only a third of the jobs in the bottom fifth offered health coverage.

Young workers currently face a particularly tough labor market, and the stakes for them are high. As the income analysis reveals, prevailing economic conditions at the start of their careers can have profound implications for where they end up. This has got to be a bitter pill for those starting out right now. For them, and for the rest of us, the sooner we take the "jobless" label out of this recovery, the better. ■

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# Doing Disservice

The benefits and limits of volunteerism

BY DRAKE BENNETT

NO MATTER WHAT WE DO, THOSE OF US IN OUR 20S can't seem to measure up to the Greatest Generation. That bygone nation of joiners, providers and world-beaters, in the standard story, puts to shame today's sad assemblage of narcissists and whiners. Gone are the days when the United States, stung by a Japanese sneak attack, rose up to shrug off the Great Depression and cohere into a fighting force of Riveting Rosies and Private Ryans. Political scientist Robert Putnam called our grandparents "the long civic generation."

Of course, the September 11 attacks did arouse a general sense of solidarity and national duty. According to the Progressive Policy Institute, there were, for example, three times as many volunteers for the national service program AmeriCorps as available slots. And despite the conventional wisdom that America's young are less civically engaged than their parents and grandparents, the reality is that young America is awash in community service. High-school and college community-service activities have never been more extensive. Many would build on this trend and dramatically expand existing service opportunities; some would even make a stint doing national service mandatory.

It's a venerable idea. For its supporters, national service does triple duty, shaping productive, selfless citizens and filling unmet social needs while creating a shared sense of national identity. As William James bracingly put it in a 1910 essay, "To coal and iron mines, to freight trains, to fishing fleets in December, to dishwashing, clothes-washing, and window-washing, to road-building and tunnel-making, to foundries and stoke-holes, and to frames of skyscrapers, would our gilded youths be drafted off, according to their choice, to get childishness knocked out of them, and to come back into society with healthier sympathies and soberer ideas."

President Bush himself has caught the national service bug. In his 2002 State of the Union address, he proposed expanding AmeriCorps by 50 percent, adding nearly \$300 million to national service spending and creating spots for 2 million Americans in the country's national service programs by some unspecified date. Characteristically, there has been no follow-up. In fact, the House of Representatives voted down an emergency \$100 million infusion for cash-strapped AmeriCorps. As the memoirist-turned-service-advocate Dave Eggers wrote in a heartbroken *New York Times* op-ed, "Congress and the White House have turned their backs on these volunteers."

But the zeal of national service proponents is undimmed. The war on terrorism and its massive security needs, they

argue, demand manpower of the sort that only a domestic army of community servants can supply. And the sense of threat has added urgency to discussions of national identity and solidarity, both issues that national service promises to address. The terrorist attacks only brought into relief a trend that has been accelerating for several years: In a growing number of states and school districts, community service is a requirement for high-school graduation, and "service learning" is the pedagogy of the day.

AS A VETERAN OF CITY YEAR—THE COMMUNITY-SERVICE organization upon which then-President Bill Clinton based AmeriCorps—and one who counts my year of service a formative and productive one, I'm not sure that this epidemic of volunteerism is entirely a welcome trend. For starters, compulsory volunteering is a contradiction in terms. Also, systemic government solutions rather than piecemeal acts of goodwill better address many of the problems that volunteers tackle. If hospitals and libraries increasingly rely on volunteers, it's because reduced federal appropriations are starving institutions that depend on public funding. In this context, well-intentioned young people who fill the gap are enablers of the attack on public services.

Moreover, much of what's done by volunteers has a tacit politics that volunteerism may inadvertently conceal. If you volunteer in a soup kitchen or help the homeless, you should also be working to eliminate the causes of homelessness. That enterprise, of course, logically leads to social change and to politics as the necessary instrument of change. But many volunteer organizations, either because of their tax status, their funding sources or their necessary nonpartisanship, take great pains to eschew politics. A few years ago, when students affiliated with Phillips Brooks House, Harvard University's pre-eminent community-service institution for undergraduates, came out in support of the school's "living wage" campaign, they earned a rebuke from the university's new president, Lawrence Summers, for taking what he judged to be an overly partisan stand.

Local service projects—George Bush Senior's "thousand points of light"—fragment political energy. Yale Law School professors Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott, in their 1999 book, *The Stakeholder Society*, take contemporary liberals to task for their unwillingness to tackle the enormous and central problem of wealth inequality in favor of "a thousand lesser policies." Universal service seems to be a pretty good example of just that. Unlike conservatives, modern liberals are unafraid to use the government to take care of what the market can or will not.



But to rely on an army of young amateurs to deal with societal needs seems a strangely indirect way to go about it. If inner-city schools are struggling, isn't the solution to give them more money for their infrastructures and teacher salaries instead of spending the money on an at best lightly trained conscript?

In addition, employers in both the public and private sectors, gifted with a national service corps of nearly 4 million, would be sorely tempted to use this pool of cheap, captive labor to phase out salaried (and benefited) employees. As Service Employees International Union lobbyist Skip Roberts dryly notes, "That might be the only reason why it might appeal to anyone in the White House."

**BUT WHAT OF THE CHARACTER-BUILDING ASPECT OF IT?** It's undeniable that some young people would have their first taste of service in such a program. However, with a vast majority of high schools participating in community service (83 percent, according to a 1999 study by the U.S. Department of Education), most students have already been exposed to the concept. And so far, research has failed to link even voluntary service with increased civic engagement. A recent study by the National Association of Secretaries of State found that youth who performed service were no more likely to be involved in politics than their nonvolunteering peers. The fact is, Americans between the ages of 15 and 25 already volunteer more than any other age group; but they also vote far less (and the number of voters continues to shrink).

According to a 2002 study released by the University of Maryland's Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), young Americans are also less likely than their (admittedly also pretty disengaged) elders to have participated in traditional forms of civic engagement—writing a letter to their congressman or newspaper, for example, or marching in a demonstration or volunteering for a political campaign.

When asked about this, the apolitical young respond that politics is, in effect, useless. Thomas Ehrlich is a former board member of the Corporation for National Service and a current scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for Teaching and Learning who studies civic engagement and service learning. He has found that "one of the reasons kids give [for their apolitical tendencies] is that they don't see a chance to make a difference. They can tutor a kid in school, clean up a park, serve in a community kitchen and feel that they're making a difference. But trying to change the political process in their community, much less the country—they don't see that happening."

Tellingly, the CIRCLE study found that the civic activities young people preferred were individual or non-governmental: buying a certain brand because they agreed with its values, for example, or donating to a charity. After all, as Michael Delli Carpini, a scholar of civic life and the dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, has noted, "Civic engagement has become *defined* as the one-on-one experience of working in a soup kitchen, clearing trash from a local river or tutoring a child once a week. What is missing is an awareness of the connection between the individual, isolated problems these actions are intended to address and the larger world of public policy." To enshrine what is in effect institutionalized volunteerism in a federal program could very well end up merely reinforcing the idea that acts of kindness, random or not, rather than governmental action, are the solution to society's ills.



Civic engagement? City Year kids collecting trash

And that is the central paradox of national service: It is big government for people who don't like big government—the counterpart of government support for local "faith-based" social services, or for traditional marriage as the cure for poverty. The current national service debate is really a holdover from the Clinton administration.

While liberals are rightly ambivalent about national service, it has gained supporters among self-styled "national greatness" conservatives, thinkers like William Kristol and David Brooks who are concerned with restoring America's sense of purpose and grandeur. For them, government is meant not so much to govern, or

even to solve social ills, but to inspire and provide its citizens with a Teddy Roosevelt-like sense of resolve and destiny. Brooks, for example, has argued that what the federal government needs to focus on is building grand monuments and institutions like the Library of Congress.

Universal service would surely be an institution, and it would provide lots of people with a sense of purpose. But surely that's setting the bar pretty low for a federal program. As Tocqueville pointed out in the 1830s, America has always had a rich social fabric of voluntary institutions. The point of government is not to keep its citizens busy living lives of vigorous action but to do what markets cannot. Yet active government requires an activist public agenda, which in turn depends on activated voters. If there's a paucity of civic engagement among the young, it is less in the area of volunteering than in taking seriously the enterprise of citizenship. ■

*DRAKE BENNETT is a freelance writer living in Boston and a former Prospect writing fellow.*



# The Students' Rep

Wisconsin Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin knows how to represent—and turn out—young people.

BY HEIDI PAUKEN

THE CAPITOL HILL OFFICE OF REP. TAMMY BALDWIN (D-Wis.) looks like nothing so much as a college bookstore without the books. Her University of Wisconsin-Madison pennant is proudly displayed, along with the matching stuffed bear, football and autographed basketball and football. A poster behind the reception desk proclaims that the Madison Area Technical College makes “everyday heroes.” A visiting student would feel comfortable here—a good thing, considering Baldwin needs student votes and works hard to get them.

At first glance, Baldwin seems the perfect pol for a liberal college town like Madison. When initially elected in 1998, she was the first non-incumbent, openly gay candidate to win a seat in Congress. She's since become a tribune for a raft of progressive and youth-oriented causes. But winning elections by mobilizing the youth vote is never easy, and it's been a constant challenge for Baldwin throughout her career. At a moment when 20-somethings and teens are tuning in to politics through the Internet and the presidential candidacy of Howard Dean, Baldwin's successes offer lessons that Democrats ignore at their peril.

Wisconsin's 2nd District is home to seven universities and colleges, the largest of which, UW-Madison, has more than 41,000 full-time students and a rich history of political activism. Any savvy candidate in this district should be campus-friendly, but Baldwin, much like the late Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.), has put students at the center of the progressive coalition that, in turn, put her and has kept her in power. Her initial run for Congress resulted in what one journalist termed an election-day “youthquake,” of a magnitude sufficient to send her to Washington.

Baldwin's campus ties date back to her first semester as a UW-Madison law student in 1986, when, at age 24, she won a seat on the Dane County Board of Supervisors. The only way to win, it was clear, was to mobilize an uncommonly mobile population that most political consultants would have written off as unmobilizable. “I didn't have a choice to campaign in more stable, less transient neighborhoods because I was running for a seat ... that had dormitory housing as well as private residence halls,” says Baldwin. “[Y]ou learn some different techniques for campaigning. You know that buying that voter list from two years prior is going to do you no good at all because there's probably a 90 percent turnover in two years.” Baldwin served four terms on the county board, then went on to represent Madison students for three terms in the state assembly before deciding to run for Congress when the Madison-area seat came open.

Facing a tough Democratic primary, Baldwin, then 36, worked Madison students like no candidate had since the Vietnam era. As a local paper reported in August of that year, “People joke that even if there's a hurricane or a nuclear war, Baldwin's supporters will make it to the polls on Sept. 8. That's the level of devotion she inspires.” Baldwin ran on a platform of single-payer universal health care, tougher environmental and labor regulations, and public financing for day care. Stoked by her commitment and the sense that in electing an open lesbian they could make some history, Baldwin's troops responded—and she beat Dane County Executive Rick Phelps by 2.3 points.

After the primary, Baldwin took on Jo Musser, a moderate Republican. By then something of a national liberal cause célèbre, Baldwin raised record amounts of money, much of which she invested in her student base. She ran campaign ads on MTV and during *Ally McBeal* that encouraged student volunteers to join the campaign. In the end, she amassed more than 3,000 volunteer precinct walkers, envelope stuffers and phone bankers, 1,700 of them students. (By contrast, Musser had 350 to 400 volunteers.) Baldwin's crew chalked miles of campus sidewalks with campaign slogans and organized the UW-Madison campus with military precision—every residence hall had a captain, every floor had a leader and Baldwin herself knocked on dorm-room doors to spread the word. She ate dinner with students at co-op houses, chatted with them at the local farmer's market and attended numerous campus forums.

In a campaign as reliant as Baldwin's on volunteer zeal, surrogates aren't nearly as effective as the candidate herself. Says Baldwin, “Showing up matters,” a credo whose importance was made abundantly clear in 2000, when she was challenged by popular UW-Madison history professor John Sharpless. Despite her organized students, Baldwin barely squeaked by, winning by a scant 51 percent to 49 percent margin. Papers attributed the close race to Sharpless' campus ties and moderate Republican platform, attractive to the district's more conservative suburbs. But Baldwin's staffers blamed Congress' long session for keeping her in Washington all fall. “The schedule really denied her the chance to interact with students,” says Baldwin's chief of staff, Bill Murat. “Face to face contact is extremely important.”

WISCONSIN IS PECULIARLY HOSPITABLE TO NEW VOTERS. It is one of a handful of states that allow same-day registration (students need only show up at the polls with photo ID and a piece of mail), and Baldwin's campaign



works tirelessly to take advantage of this law. (In neighboring Minnesota, same-day registration was one key to the election-day victories of both Wellstone and former Gov. Jesse Ventura.)

For the midterm election of 1998, Wisconsin election officials had predicted 40 percent statewide voter turnout. In fact, while the state saw 45.4 percent participation, Dane County logged 55 percent. Baldwin's "youthquake" caused 28 polling places to run out of ballots, and some voters waited in line for more than two hours to cast their vote.

According to UW-Madison professor David T. Canon, in the six wards with the highest student density, Baldwin received 70.1 percent of the vote. "People say that students won that election for her," says Kris Johnson, UW-Madison student and director of the Lesbian-Gay-Bi-Transgender Center on campus. "I totally believe it." As *The Washington Post* later reported, Baldwin swept the university students by an 8,100-vote margin, winning her seat over Musser by 13,600 votes.

DURING HER FOUR-PLUS YEARS IN Congress, Baldwin has made students a consistent priority. She co-sponsored legislation to double Pell Grants from \$3,500 to \$7,000 and continually works to secure funding for schools in her area. Early this July, Baldwin secured \$100,000 in federal funding for the University of Wisconsin-Rock, which isn't even located in her district but serves some of her constituents.

Attentive scheduling is one basic but important way that Baldwin makes time for students. She meets with young voters in her Washington office, at brown-bag lunches on campuses and in interviews with the editorial boards of school newspapers. Baldwin travels back to her district every weekend to participate in casual local events, on and off campus. Her Web site devotes an entire section to student readers, including a "Dear Student" letter from the congresswoman herself. Because e-mail is the one address most likely to follow a student through every college year, Baldwin also encourages collegians to sign up for her office's electronic newsletters.

All members of Congress have Web sites and e-mail, of course, but few use technology to its full advantage, especially when it comes to students. While Baldwin does have a sizable young constituency, she has colleagues with comparable student populations: Rep. Michael Capuano (D-Mass.) represents more than 145,000 students from 32 schools (including Harvard University, Boston College, Boston University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in his district of 620,372; Ohio State University's 57,271 students look to Rep. Deborah Pryce (R-

Ohio) for representation; the district of Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.) is home to Ann Arbor's University of Michigan (35,700 students), Eastern Michigan University (23,710) and several other schools. But none of these Congress members' Web sites offer much more than a list of links to local colleges, some three clicks into the site. Even Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), who represents the University of California, Berkeley (33,145) and 13 other schools and does have a section of student resource-type links, fails to write directly to student readers and nowhere mentions her efforts to champion student concerns.

According to Baldwin, that type of proactive "you matter" communication is key, and she shows that she's paying attention by "engaging in the issues that young voters are concerned about." Baldwin cites foreign policy, civil rights, civil liberties, environmental protection and a woman's right to choose as her students' current concerns—issues that might be on the minds of many constituents, young and old.



Baldwinning ways

IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO PORTRAY Baldwin as just a "students" representative, and it would be a mistake for her to act like one. Wisconsin's 2nd District is quite diverse: Madison, the liberal stronghold that is home to the university and more than 200,000 residents, makes up just one-third of the district. The other two-thirds is split evenly between rural areas and

growing suburbs, both more conservative than the capital city. Baldwin represents the Oscar Meyer headquarters (her office displays the famous wiener, too), farmers, veterans and working families.

Baldwin's knack for satisfying a spectrum of constituents and still finding time for students makes the congresswoman tough to duplicate, her supporters say. But there are other exceptional circumstances at work, too: Few states have enacted the student-friendly process of same-day registration, Madison students were already politically active (though they'd grown a bit dormant until Baldwin came along) and Baldwin started forging student relationships when she was herself a young student.

Still, a lot of Baldwin's appeal seems rooted in nothing more than a common sense that could be growing even more common with the early successes of Howard Dean among younger voters. "She is where she is today because of the students," says Katie Belanger, a recent Madison grad and Baldwin's 2002 campaign field director. "I don't know if other people are able to do that. I hope that everyone would try." ■

HEIDI PAUKEN is *the Prospect's* assistant editor.



THE DIXIE CHICKS & ROCK THE VOTE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE

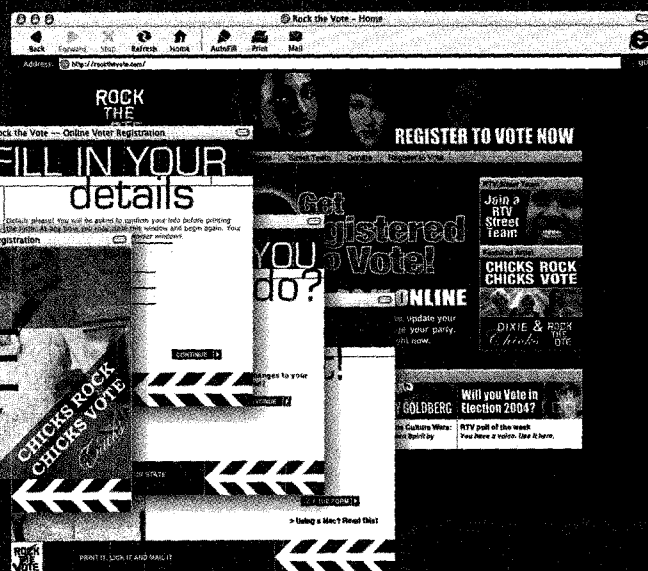
# Chicks Rock, Chicks Vote!

# ROCK THE VOTE

[rockthevote.com/dcx/](http://rockthevote.com/dcx/)

*"It is important for young people to know they have the power to Rock the Vote. Only 36% of Americans between the ages of 18-24 voted in the last presidential election."*

*... The Dixie Chicks*



**Chicks Rock, Chicks Vote** is a new campaign to energize young people, and particularly young women, to learn more about the issues they care about... and make the government address these issues... by voting!

A central feature of the campaign is urging young people to register to vote at Rock the Vote's website. A new flash-based application - with a Dixie Chicks intro - takes you through the process. All you have to do is **"print it and sign it, lick it and mail it."**

Are you registered to vote - at your current address? Are your friends? Don't miss out on your chance to participate - nothing speaks louder than your vote. Visit our website, sign up for our list, join our peer-to-peer action campaign, and get ready to Rock the Vote!

**Register to Vote today:**  
[rockthevote.com/dcx/](http://rockthevote.com/dcx/)





# Preserving Choice

BY KATE MICHELMAN

Each year the anti-abortion movement becomes more aggressive and insidious in its campaign to undermine reproductive rights. But somehow the abortion-rights majority—convinced that a broad base of support protects the freedoms we cherish—

dismisses the threat. This complacency is the anti-choice movement's strongest asset.

William Saletan looks at this conundrum in his new book, *Bearing Right: How Conservatives Won the Abortion War*. Saletan begins by incisively recounting the most visible part of the abortion story—what one reviewer called America's "Thirty Years' War" over the basic protections enshrined in *Roe v. Wade*. His thorough reporting shows how our movement cemented a clear public majority for what is an essentially conservative position: that reproductive decisions fall into a realm of personal privacy where government has no place. He revisits the success of our compelling message: "Who Decides? You or Them?"

The book also examines the shrewdness of anti-choice activists in shifting the debate away from basic questions and onto seemingly peripheral issues like parental consent requirements and the individual procedures referred to by the inflammatory (and inaccurate) name of "partial-birth abortion." Reflecting the conventional wisdom that the general public consensus favors the right to choose but also favors restrictions, Saletan and others think our movement should not take on such battles.

Leaving aside the fact that when voters have been able to examine restrictive proposals more thoroughly, they have defeated them in referenda across the country, there are serious flaws in this view. In reality, the right to choose is already eroding for many women.

The anti-choice movement's militant wing has used intimidation tactics to dramatically reduce the number of doctors willing to risk their practices and their lives by even training to perform abortions. Nearly 90 percent of all U.S. counties have no abortion providers whatsoever.

Every year, state and federal governments add new restrictions. The women targeted by these restrictions tend to be poor, or young, or in a life-endangering situation late in pregnancy, or live in a rural area or serve in the U.S. military. Each new restriction represents a strategic step toward a long-term goal the far right has never abandoned: total abolition of the right to choose.

Under the Bush administration, this strategy of incremental abolition has only picked up steam. Bush ally Samuel B. Casey, executive director of the Christian Legal Society, plainly laid out the long-term plan in a recent *Los Angeles*

*Times* article: "In as many areas as we can, we want to put on the books that the embryo is a person. That sets the stage for a jurist to acknowledge that human beings at any stage of development deserve protection—even protection that would trump a woman's interest in terminating a pregnancy."

The administration has pursued this goal wherever expedient. Under cover of providing medical assistance to uninsured pregnant women who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid—a step that the administration resisted as a free-standing measure—Bush officials have expanded the definition of "childhood" to include the period between conception and birth.

The White House has been even more shameless in promoting what used to be called the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act" and is now referred to as "Laci and Conner's Law" (in reference to the horrible Peterson family tragedy in California). The administration claims the bill is merely intended to punish violence against women more severely when it injures or terminates a pregnancy. If that were all it did, abortion-rights advocates would support it. Our movement is committed to ensuring women the right to become mothers when they choose to. But this bill's real purpose is evident from its legislative language, which defines the fetus as a person. The anti-choice crowd has tried to deny that this would have an impact on *Roe*, but one of its sponsors, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), admitted to a CNN interviewer last May 7, "They say it undermines abortion rights. It does."

Organizations like NARAL Pro-Choice America—and those who share our commitment to reproductive freedom—must oppose such tactics or we will see our rights disappear by degree. Leaving vulnerable women in a position where their right to choose exists only on paper would be morally unacceptable. And allowing the far right to advance its strategic agenda uncontested would amount to waiting until the wolves are at the door. We must resist the far right and remind people that every intrusion on personal privacy is an assault on the fundamental liberties we cherish. Because it still boils down to that same basic question: Who decides? ■

KATE MICHELMAN is the president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, the leading national advocate for personal privacy and the right to choose.



# Bush's Borrowing Binge

BY ROBERT S. MCINTYRE

This August, while everyone in Washington was away, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) quietly published its latest update on our nation's fiscal situation. It's one of the CBO's more enlightening—and frightening—efforts. If you read the report

carefully, you'll discover that however badly you might have thought President Bush was managing the government, things are actually much worse.

The CBO's report gets off to a slow start—as usual, leading off with its silly, albeit much-cited, “baseline” budget projections. Assume, says the CBO, that government spending plummets as a share of the economy, that tax cuts ostensibly “sunsetting” really go away, that the alternative minimum tax engulfs 30 million families and that the earth is flat. Then the budget picture, while very ugly in the short run, will slowly improve down the road.

Indeed, under this relatively rosy scenario, a decade from now the annual deficit in the regular budget could be a mere \$105 billion.

The enlightening part comes later in the report, when the CBO shows us what happens if one scraps all those patently false assumptions. The effects of facing reality are striking. For example, the CBO's more plausible figures indicate that under current policies, the annual deficit outside of Social Security is likely to hit a staggering \$1,098 billion by 2013—10 times the ridiculous “baseline” estimate.

To be sure, the CBO doesn't present its more realistic projections in a user-friendly form. Some of the important information is hidden in footnotes, and nowhere is everything added up. But with a little arithmetic, here's what the CBO's nonpartisan experts seem to think is a reasonable assessment of where Bush's policies are taking our nation.

- Under Dubyanomics, a third of the federal government outside of Social Security will be paid for with borrowed money—this year and for the foreseeable future. No president, not even Ronald Reagan, has ever made such a mess of the budget over such a sustained period of time.

- Compared with when Bush took office, the national debt, including amounts owed to Social Security, is expected to more than triple by fiscal 2013, to \$14 trillion. Bush's campaign promise that he would continue Clinton's policy of paying down the debt turns out to have been a \$10 trillion fib.

- As a share of the economy, the government's debt is expected to rise from 45 percent in 2001 to 79 percent by 2013—a 77 percent jump. Such a debt level in relation to the economy hasn't been seen since the World War II era.

- In the coming fiscal year, the \$661 billion regular budget deficit will be almost 6 percent of the economy. Annual deficits are expected to exceed 6 percent of the economy from fiscal 2009 on. That's a level seen only once since World War II, in fiscal 1983 under Reagan. So much for the Bush administration's frequent claim that its deficits are “moderate by any historical measure” as a share of the economy.

- The Federal Reserve's aggressively low interest rates have kept federal interest outlays in check for now, but after fiscal 2005, interest payments are expected to rise rapidly. By 2009 and thereafter, the government is likely to be spending more on interest on the debt than on all domestic discretionary programs.

Although Bush blames his fiscal profligacy on necessary increases in defense and security spending, that's hardly the case. In the president's first term, 40 percent of his \$2.2 trillion in deficit spending is directly attributable to his tax cuts, with the lousy economy responsible for most of the rest. Over the next four years, half of the \$3.1 billion in projected deficit spending reflects Bush's tax cuts. Thereafter, tax reductions explain three-fifths of the huge deficits we'll face if Bush's policies are left in place.

So if you want to find the war that's to blame for most of our looming long-term budget crisis, it's not in Afghanistan or Iraq. Instead, it's right here—the class warfare our president has been waging to lower taxes on the rich.

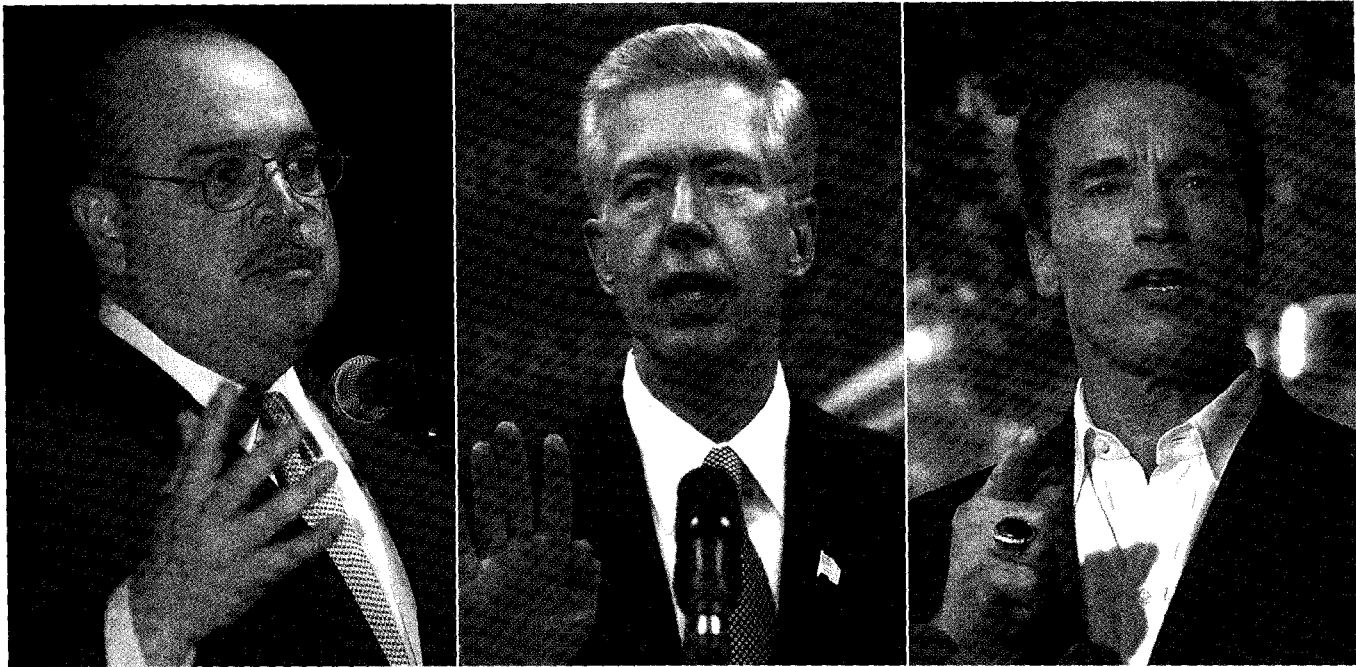
## MCI GOOD NEWS UPDATE

In my last column, I complained about a \$10 billion tax loophole that MCI/WorldCom was trying to create for itself as it emerged from bankruptcy. I noted that the IRS probably had the power to stop the loophole by regulation, but that the Bush administration hadn't yet acted. At the end of August, however, the IRS issued a new regulation that appears to solve the problem. So, some rare kudos to Bush on tax policy. It obviously helped that MCI's competitors, AT&T and Verizon, were pushing hard for this sensible change. ■

ROBERT S. MCINTYRE is the director of Citizens for Tax Justice.







Sub-golden options: the Cruz, the Gray and the Ah-nold

# Recalling the Future

Can a bizarre political process reverse California's transformation into a Democratic state?

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

**I. HIRAM JOHNSON'S MESS** The land may have been ours before we were the land's, as Robert Frost wrote, but not in California. The Progressives saw to that. When people arrived in my home state, there were no political institutions to reach out to them or

provide an orientation; there was nothing they could join. Whether they came from the Midwest in the years before World War II, enticed by the glossy brochures with the pictures of orange groves that the chambers of commerce put out, or in desperation from Mexico during the past two decades, in flight from an economy in collapse, they found themselves in a peculiar vacuum: Politically, at least, there was no one around to welcome them.

Most particularly, there were no parties. The Progressives may have liked direct democracy, and they instituted the initiative, the referendum and the recall when their leader, Hiram Johnson, became governor and they took control of the legislature in 1911. But what really got them going was their hatred of political parties. They didn't content themselves, like their East Coast counterparts, simply with substituting civil service for patronage jobs; they killed the parties that had proffered those jobs. The Southern Pacific Railroad had controlled the parties in California, and the Progressives couldn't kill the railroad, but they could make the parties go away. And it wasn't just corporate power that vexed them: At the other end of the spectrum of Progressive

fears, the Debsian socialists were close to winning control of a number of California cities—Socialist Party candidate Job Harriman was almost elected mayor of Los Angeles in 1911—and one way to ensure that the working men of California would resist the socialist temptation was to take the party labels off the ballot.

The Progressives kept parties at the federal level (they had to), but they made all local elective offices—cities and counties both—nonpartisan, and they made it possible for state officials to “cross-file,” that is, to run in more than one party's primary (a practice that endured until midcentury). Some of California's most enduringly successful political leaders—Govs. Earl Warren and Pat Brown among them—did just that as they worked their way up the political ladder in the 1930s and '40s. And there was something to be said for a system that produced leaders like Warren and Brown. But that wasn't all it produced.

For all their myriad flaws, parties remain indispensable to a functioning politics. It's parties that channel popular desires and discontents into realizable and sustainable political change. In California, however, and in their absence, a dif-



ferent tradition arose. At least as far back as the 1920s, political movements have arisen in California that have taken those discontents more directly to the public. From the Townsend movement of the '30s, with its crackpot plan for old-age pensions; to right-wing crank Howard Jarvis and his Proposition 13, which froze property taxes on both aged widows and Chevron; to the Orange County nativists who devised Proposition 187 in 1994 in order to have the children of the state's several million illegal immigrants thrown out of public schools—California has long been home to an array of conservative activists able to exploit white, middle-class fears.

Perhaps direct democracy is better suited to mobilizing fears than hopes. There have been a few successful California initiatives that have come from the left—protecting the coastline, lowering auto-insurance rates, raising the state minimum wage—but they are the exceptions to a long right-wing rule. In general, direct democracy in California has meant the white middle class running amok to its right—repealing fair housing legislation, enacting three-strikes laws for nonviolent felons, imposing on legislators term limits so abbreviated that they're still learning how a bill becomes a law as they're being shown the door.

Precisely because they set the state's white middle class on a rightward tack, some of California's most famous initiative campaigns have aided or portended a Republican

Schwarzenegger's celebrity and Gray Davis' unpopularity to bring back conservative California? Or is this just the present-day version of the Plains Indians performing the Ghost Dance in the hope that it will bring back the buffalo?

## II. SCHWARZENEGGER'S SHOT

One thing is certain: If the Republicans can't win the recall, it's hard to imagine a California election in which they could prevail for the foreseeable future. This should be their moment—or, more precisely, their electorate.

For on the matter of Davis, the Democrats lack all conviction while the Republicans are full of passionate intensity. Democrats constitute 45 percent of the state's registered voters while Republicans make up just 35 percent of the electorate—but that's not how the recall electorate is shaping up. In a *Los Angeles Times* poll taken in late August, Republicans constituted 43 percent of the likely turnout, with the Democrats logging in at 45 percent. That kind of intensity gap is specific to the moment—and to Gray Davis.

Indeed, the reason that Davis defeated Republican Bill Simon last November by just a scant 5 percent was that he lost the support of the Democratic base. More particularly, nonwhite turnout collapsed. In 1998, when Davis won the governorship and beat Republican Dan Lungren by a stunning 20 percent margin, blacks constituted 13 percent of

## **If the Republicans can't win the recall, it's hard to imagine a California election in which they could prevail. This should be their moment—and their electorate.**

resurgence. The anti-housing desegregation initiative of 1964 (Proposition 14) laid some of the groundwork for Ronald Reagan's election as governor two years later; Howard Jarvis' Proposition 13 in 1978 paved the way for Reagan's "government is the problem" presidential campaign two years hence; and Pete Wilson's embrace of the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in 1994 shored up what until then had been a lagging gubernatorial re-election campaign.

Which brings us to this strangest of all eruptions of California's direct democracy: the recall of '03. A recall, of course, is not an initiative; it doesn't portend or assist a political transformation; it *is* a political transformation. More precisely, the recall of 2003 is a counter-transformation intended to halt a deep and ongoing political transformation—that of once conservative California, homeland of Richard Nixon, the John Birchers, Jarvis and Reagan into the most liberal state in the land. It is one of only two states under wall-to-wall Democratic control, with its governor, its senators and its other statewide officials all Democrats, and with heavy Democratic majorities in its legislature and congressional delegation.

Transformations this profound don't occur because soccer moms have switched their allegiance. Overwhelmingly, the most important reason why California has changed its politics is that it has been racially remade: In the 2000 census, it became the second state (after Hawaii) where whites no longer constituted a majority. And so there is to the recall a kind of Republican desperation: Can enough middle-class whites be mobilized to the right one more time to stop the state's leftward march? Can Republicans exploit Arnold

the voter turnout and Latinos another 13 percent. Last fall, however, the black share of the electorate declined to 4 percent, and the Latino slice to 10 percent, according to the *Times* exit polls.

It was hard to look at these results and see portents of a Republican renaissance. In a state growing steadily less white, with an electorate evolving on a similar trajectory, Republican prospects seemed linked to the whitening of California voters. And what were the odds of that happening?

In October's upcoming recall, not all that bad. If Schwarzenegger can consolidate his Republican base—no easy task so long as state Sen. Tom McClintock, a right-wing zealot beloved of other right-wing zealots, remains in the race—win some independents and mobilize the kind of apolitical young men who were the key to Jesse Ventura's success, the Republicans might just retake the state house.

That's still a lot of "ifs," even if McClintock does eventually drop from the field. To begin with, California doesn't have Minnesota's election-day registration, which made it easy for Ventura's unregistered acolytes to cast their votes for him.

Perhaps just as injurious to Schwarzenegger is the absence of a moderate wing within the California Republican Party. The right has dominated the party since the Goldwaterites swept the state in 1964. Pete Wilson was the closest thing to a moderate that state Republicans have produced since the '60s, but Wilson was indulged by his fellow Republicans only because he won elections. When he consigned himself, and his party, to the political wilderness by enraging Latinos via his campaign for Prop. 187, he and his tendency sunk with-



out a trace. In Los Angeles, a genuinely moderate Republican, Richard Riordan, served as a nonpartisan mayor for the better part of the '90s, but most of his key supporters and staffers were Democrats.

So when Schwarzenegger assembled a staff, he could do no better than pick up Wilson's old entourage—an able group, but with baggage that greatly diminished his appeal to Latino voters. More seriously still, no California Republicans have the flexibility on economic issues that enabled New York Republican Gov. George Pataki to pick up the kind of Latino support that Schwarzenegger badly needs (much less the union support that Schwarzenegger can't even conceive of).

Indeed, Schwarzenegger is about to hit a wall: There is almost nothing in California Republican economics, Schwarzenegger's included, that's appealing to Latinos. In a major poll conducted last fall by the Pew Hispanic Center, Latinos parted company from both whites and blacks in favoring (by a 55 percent to 38 percent margin) a bigger government that taxes more to provide a high level of services over a smaller government that taxes less and provides fewer services. Even Latino Republicans backed a high-taxing big government. Similarly, we know from exit polling on a 1998 ballot measure that California Latinos are the most staunchly pro-union group in the California electorate (slightly more so, in fact, than union members themselves).

Contrast, then, Schwarzenegger's insistence that Californians are overtaxed and that unions are special interests with the positions of Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante, the leading Democrat on the second half of the recall ballot. The lieutenant governor's call for higher taxes on the wealthy to close the state's deficit is precisely attuned to rallying Latino voters to his column.

And rallying Latino, and black, support is the only way Bustamante beats Schwarzenegger—and the only way Davis beats the recall.

### III. DAVIS DESPITE HIMSELF

For their separate and not entirely compatible campaigns, both Davis and Bustamante—who loathe each other—are working to energize the Democratic base. In early August, Davis announced he'd support a bill enabling illegal immigrants to get drivers' licenses, something he'd long opposed on security grounds. In its current form, the bill he's committed to sign actually makes it easier for immigrants to get licenses than the measure he vetoed last year. One prominent state Latino leader recounts Davis asking him shortly after the recall qualified, "How do I justify signing this?" To which the leader replied, "How do you win the recall without it? And beyond that, what does it matter?"

Indeed, if Davis is defeated this October, the last 60 days of his administration may feature a flurry of progressive legislation comparable to the first hundred days of other, more liberal administrations. In late August, for example, he signed

a landmark statute giving California consumers far more control over their financial records than federal law, or that of any other state, allows.

There's a considerable irony here, and it is that Davis has signed a great deal of groundbreaking liberal legislation—and worked mightily to keep it a secret from the party base he now so desperately needs. Presiding over a legislature far more liberal than he, Davis, in his four-plus years as governor, has signed laws creating the first paid family-leave program in the United States, creating binding arbitration for state farm workers, creating far stricter fuel-efficiency standards than those the federal government imposes, requiring utilities to derive 20 percent of their power from renewable sources by the middle of the next decade, funding stem-cell research, enabling Californians to sue gun manufacturers for the effects of gun violence—all this at a time when the fed-



Shades on both sides

eral government has been moving rapidly to the right.

But Davis mentioned none of this in his campaign last year against Simon. Damaged by his slow and timorous response to the energy crisis, he determined to wage a negative campaign solely. On a deeper level, it's not clear that he took much pleasure in even the most notable of his accomplishments. The most unhappy warrior I've ever encountered on the political battlefield, Davis seems always more worried about the support he'll estrange by backing a bill than gratified by whatever good that bill may do. Seeking to mollify Latinos for his veto of the drivers' license bill last year, he said he looked forward to the day when "we'll get this all behind us." I know of no other political leader who in a public speech would discuss a piece of civil-rights legislation chiefly as a personal political ordeal.

Now, for the first time since he's been governor, he's touting his achievements. This will help him turn out some of the party base. So will Cruz Bustamante.

### IV. CRUZ WITHOUT ILLUSIONS

The lieutenant governor's challenge is less daunting than governor's. Davis needs 50 percent of the vote while



Bustamante needs only a plurality in a field of 135 candidates. That probably means somewhere between 40 percent and 45 percent, and Bustamante's waging the kind of rally-the-troops campaign that's sure to bring in 40 percent.

It's a good thing that Bustamante's bar is lower, because unlike Davis, he has no real achievements to which he can point. Affable and unpretentious, Bustamante is a career political staffer propelled by term limits and ambition—both his and that of his political consultant, Richie Ross—into the California Assembly, where he served an 18-month term as speaker and moved on to the largely powerless office of lieutenant governor. His career has been a triumph of persistence—and just plain, dumb luck—over brilliance. “He is not the sharpest tool in the shed,” says one veteran Sacramento Democrat in a comment that pretty much sums up the sentiment on Cruz.

Before the recall, Democrats looking ahead to the gubernatorial contest of 2006 increasingly overlooked Bustamante. Both Attorney General Bill Lockyer and Treasurer Phil Angelides had impressed state Democrats as stellar progressives. Bustamante, by contrast, had no notable supporters outside the tribal casinos whose interests he routinely championed. Indeed, the word in Sacramento was that he had determined to forgo a run for governor and seek instead the treasurer's slot, from which Angelides was term-limited out. When the recall qualified, then, Bustamante and Ross looked at the new landscape and concluded, in the words of one former colleague, that “there was no reason for Cruz not to do this, no downside at all.” If he lost, he'd still get a leg up in the 2006 gubernatorial primary he hadn't planned on entering at all. If he beat Schwarzenegger and Davis prevailed, he might be the favorite in '06. And if he beat Schwarzenegger and Davis didn't pull through, he'd not only be governor but the savior of California Democrats.

And yet, for all that they want to avoid a Republican resurgence, California Democratic and liberal leaders express a profound depth of misgivings toward Bustamante. “It's very hard to get invested in Cruz's candidacy,” says one leading Democrat. “Cruz is not Antonio [Villaraigosa, the progressive Los Angeles City Council member almost elected mayor in 2001]. He was a real agribusiness Democrat—no progressive. His speakership [in 1997–98] was not very good for workers. That's when the legislature voted to take drivers' licenses away from immigrant workers. The deals he made were against his own community.”

Unlike Villaraigosa, who came out of the political ferment of the east L.A. barrio, Bustamante hails from the farm towns on the outskirts of Fresno, one of the most conservative areas of the state. His first political job, at age 19, was as a summer intern for Fresno Congressman B.F. Sisk, a Democrat whose voting record was closer to those of southern Dixiecrats than those of any of his California colleagues.

Once Bustamante became an assemblyman, he frequently represented business interests even when they clashed with those of core Democratic constituencies. A major recipient of tobacco money, he worked unsuccessfully to block the legislation that banned smoking in the workplace. He was also known as a Democrat who'd carry the insurance industry's water in fights against consumers and trial lawyers. One assembly colleague recalls how, after Pete Wilson eliminated

overtime pay for workers who put in more than an eight-hour day, Bustamante carried a bill for the California Mining Association that would eliminate overtime for mine workers, who were statutorily exempted from Wilson's new policy. Bustamante then negotiated a compromise with the affected unions. It was the kind of both-ends-against-the-middle strategy that helped him expand his funding base, and at which Ross—notorious in Sacramento for lobbying on behalf of interests frequently opposed to one another—excels.

There's a reason, then, why state labor leaders, as they gear up to wage the most extensive get-out-the-vote operation they've ever run, plan to emphasize the “No-on-the-Recall” message much more than their support for Bustamante: They're not at all keen on the thought of Cruz as governor. “Davis is nothing great, and Cruz isn't going to be even that good,” says one. “He's not a caveman, like the Republicans; he's just a very moderate Democrat, a business Democrat.” Ideally, union leaders want Bustamante to defeat Schwarzenegger—but with Davis hanging on to his job, so that Lockyer or Angelides could campaign to succeed him in '06.

## V. WHOSE CALIFORNIA?

If anything, labor leaders have deliberately downplayed the extent of the operation they're preparing to mount. Even so, they come to the race with a stellar reputation. Since 1996, when Miguel Contreras took the helm at the L.A. County Federation of Labor, the state's labor movement has become the most adept operation in the country for turning out both the labor and the Latino votes. In 2000, union members constituted 34 percent of the California electorate, and Latino voters made up 15 percent of the voting public, up from 9 percent in 1992. But labor has done more than turn out the vote; it's turned it around. In the summer of 1998, polling showed that roughly seven in 10 union voters backed Proposition 226, which would have curtailed labor's ability to engage in elections. By election day, nearly 70 percent of union voters opposed that measure. A similar turnaround is now required to boost Davis' support among union members, labor political operatives readily concede.

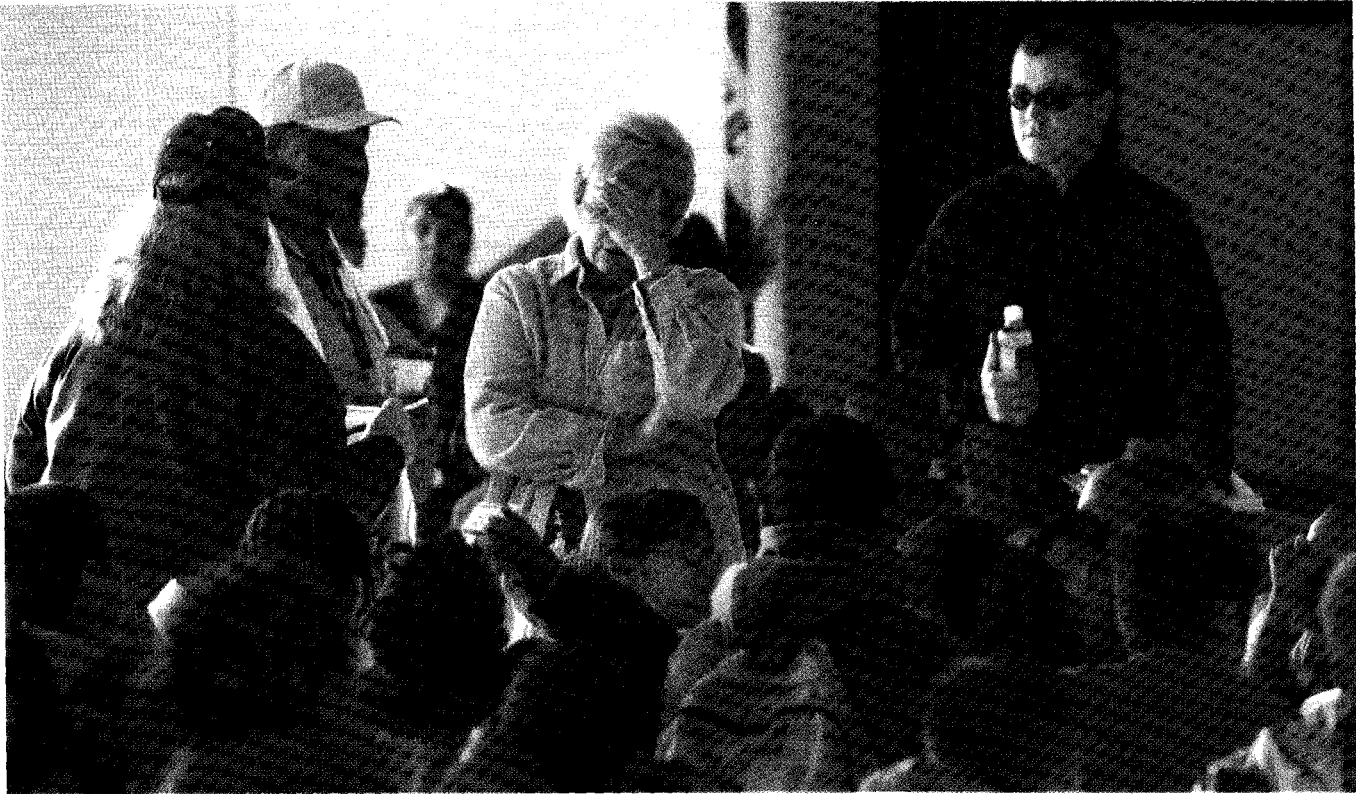
Since its birth in the mid-1990s, the labor-Latino operation has been largely confined to the Los Angeles metropolitan area. This time around, however, the program is being expanded to cover all of southern California and much of the Central Valley (Bustamante country). Campaigning for Davis and Bustamante is all well and good, but the unions will clearly—perhaps, primarily—be campaigning against a third term for Wilson as well.

For all that Schwarzenegger represents a new and unheralded departure in California politics, a victory for Arnold would ultimately mean a restoration of the ancient regime—a provisional restoration unless a Gov. Schwarzenegger proves far more adept than candidate Schwarzenegger has shown himself to be. For their part, campaigning for two candidates about whom they feel ambivalent at best, Democrats in general and the labor-Latino alliance most particularly are determined to demonstrate that California's white, middle-class uprisings can no longer knock the state off its new political axis. ■

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HAROLD MEYERSON *is the Prospect's editor at large.*





Meltdown: West Fresno grade school teachers, staffers and kids in a campus cafeteria last November, when the district was unable to meet its payroll

# Scandalous Schools

After a quarter-century of tax revolt, California's schools rank with Mississippi's.

BY DAVID L. KIRP AND MARSHALL S. SMITH

"THE CONDITION OF CALIFORNIA SCHOOL FACILITIES AND Policies Related to Those Conditions," a 2002 report by nationally recognized facilities expert Robert Corley, is written in stilted bureaucratese, but the conditions it describes are the stuff of exposés. Corley describes peeling lead paint on classroom walls; leaky roofs; deathly hot classrooms, their windows blacked out against the heat; bathrooms "reminiscent of third world slums," or else padlocked; vermin-infested buildings. These aren't rarities: The report estimates that a third of the schools are in "poor condition" and 10 percent—some 800 buildings, housing more than 400,000 schoolchildren—are in "unusually poor condition." A General Accounting Office study, published in 1996, ranks California's school buildings the fourth worst in the nation. Where is Michael Harrington when we need him?

If these were gas-station restrooms or greasy spoons, you'd give them a wide berth. But the students trapped inside for six hours a day don't have that option. Such miserable conditions help to "transform yearning for quality education into anger, pride into shame and civic engagement into public alienation," concludes social psychologist Michelle Fine, who interviewed and surveyed more than 100 students from those neglected schools. A dispropor-

tionate number of the students who go to such schools are poor and nonwhite. Yet regardless of a student's racial or socioeconomic background, youngsters attending schools with inadequate facilities and materials did considerably worse on reading and math achievement tests than their counterparts in up-to-date schools.

WHILE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE NOW being forced to trim their budgets, California's were in trouble years before the state awoke last winter to the grim reality of a \$38 billion budget deficit. The Golden State used to be a "model and magnet for the nation—in its economic opportunities, its social outlook, and its high-quality public services and institutions," writes Peter Schrag in *Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future*. But in the aftermath of Proposition 13, what Schrag calls the "Mississippification" of the state has proceeded apace. Mississippi's schools actually look better in some respects than California's, for the sorry physical condition of school buildings is the embodiment in bricks and mortar of the decline of a once-vaunted public-education system.

During the past quarter-century, expenditures per pupil have fallen nearly one-fourth when compared with the na-



tional average. *Education Week* ranked California fourth worst in the nation in adequacy of resources for education. According to EdSource, an independent information-gathering organization, taxpayers spend about 3 percent of their personal income on kindergarten through 12th-grade education, 40th in the nation. Despite a mid-1990s push to reduce class size in kindergarten through third grade, the state ranks 49th in the number of students per teacher. The U.S. average is about 16-to-1; in California it's nearly 21-to-1. That translates directly into lower quality of instruction and less support for students.

The problem isn't just the student-teacher ratio. It's also the quality of instruction. Some 42,000 instructors—as many as in half the other states combined—lack teaching credentials, and 38,000 more are working with emergency permits. Stanford University education professor Linda Darling-Hammond calculates that students attending schools whose enrollment is drawn from the lowest quartile of socioeconomic status are five times more likely to have underqualified teachers than students going to schools that draw from the top quartile.

Meanwhile, the “frills” of education—libraries, art and music classes in grade school—are disappearing from California's public schools. Textbooks are in short supply—so short that some 2 million schoolchildren don't have textbooks they can take home. There is just one guidance

The familiar excuse is that demographics explain these outcomes, but demography isn't destiny. The contrast with Texas, the state whose student population is most similar to California's in terms of the percentage of poor and non-white students, demonstrates the point. In 1990, students in both states performed at about the same level. Forty-five percent of the eighth-grade students demonstrated at least basic competence in mathematics. That year the national average was 51 percent. Within two years, however, Texas' NAEP scores were higher than California's. In 2000, 52 percent of California eighth-graders had mastered at least basic math, which represented a slight improvement over the course of a decade. But by then California had slipped farther behind the national average, which had risen to 65 percent—and 68 percent of Texas students were performing at that level.

These same disparities hold true for racial and ethnic minorities. In the 2000 eighth-grade math exam, 34 percent of Hispanic students in California scored at the basic level or higher, compared with 59 percent in Texas; for African American students, the comparable figures are 25 percent and 40 percent. Although reading scores for California's Hispanic and black fourth-graders improved by nearly a grade level between 1992 and 2002, eighth-graders didn't register similar gains.

## **In California public schools, some 42,000 instructors lack teaching credentials, and an additional 38,000 are working with emergency permits.**

counselor for every 1,011 students, a ratio that's more than twice the national average. Realistically, this means that only a handful of students get any advice about college or jobs. There's one librarian for every 4,454 students; that's the population of a small town and more than five times the national average. In the state that's known as the high-tech capital of the universe, 7.2 students share every computer, as compared with 4.9 students nationwide. In each of these categories, California ranks 51st—dead last.

NOT ONLY DOES THE PAUCITY OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS, computers, art classes and textbooks turn schools into cheerless places, it also affects students' academic success. A report by the Public Policy Institute of California concludes that California lost ground in academic achievement as well as school expenditures during the 1980s and '90s. Scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the best single measure of achievement, reflect this pattern: California students perform considerably below the national average in reading, mathematics, science and writing. In 2000, barely half of the state's eighth-graders demonstrated at least basic competence in math, as compared with two-thirds nationally, placing California 32nd among the 40 participating states and territories (and the District of Columbia). On the reading exam, the state ranked 32nd out of 36. On the science exam, students in California, who live in the epicenter of scientific research, ranked 37th out of 38. Only Guam did worse. Even taking into account the proportion of non-native English speakers, California students still perform poorly on the NAEP exam.

Politics helps to explain the different outcomes. In the mid-1980s, a pint-sized billionaire named Ross Perot made public education in Texas his issue. The Perot Commission, composed mainly of leading businessmen, urged that the state boost expenditures on the schools while imposing tough statewide academic performance standards. When high-school quarterbacks started getting benched for not maintaining a C average (under “no pass, no play” rules), Texans got the message: These reforms had to be taken seriously. A succession of governors, both Republican and Democratic, have stuck to the game plan.

By contrast, there has been no game plan in California, just posturing and political opportunism. The main K-12 education initiative of the 1990s—reducing class sizes in the early elementary-school grades—was politically irresistible but badly thought-out policy. Although school districts cut the size of kindergarten through third-grade classes, many were forced for lack of funds to increase class sizes in grades four through six.

Meanwhile, California's business leaders have absented themselves from debates over public education, choosing to import skilled workers from India rather than to press for better schools at home. (The major exception is high-tech entrepreneur Ron Unz. His passions have been curtailing bilingual education and encouraging the proliferation of charter schools, neither of which does much for the education of most California schoolchildren.)

Can California dig itself out of this hole? The best news has to do with the physical condition of the schools. Last fall voters approved the state's biggest bond issue ever—\$13.1 bil-



lion, earmarked to build new schools and modernize old ones. Voters in Los Angeles endorsed a separate \$3.5 billion school bond issue for the state's biggest school district.

Today the state is swept up in one of its periodic political upheavals, and again voters are hearing from the likes of gubernatorial candidates Arnold Schwarzenegger and Peter Ueberroth that California taxpayers are among the most overtaxed in the nation. It's not true: According to the Public Policy Institute of California, the state ranks 19th in the percentage of personal income spent on state and local governments. But if Californians elect a new governor who's committed to solving the budget crisis entirely by cutting expenditures, public education is in for even rockier times. Regardless of the outcome of the recall election, though, the future is murky.

One helpful step would be voter approval of a proposition, likely to appear on the November 2004 ballot, that would authorize school districts to raise property tax rates if 55 percent of the voters agree (not the two-thirds supermajority that Proposition 13 requires). The adoption by the state legislature of a proposed master plan would mark another step in the right direction. Under the plan, kindergarten would be required and preschool programs expanded in school districts with the worst achievement scores. Vitally, the plan would make the state commit itself to providing "suitable learning environments" in every school. This would mean no more shuttered bathrooms, no more vermin and no more unqualified teachers. But the master plan, which would have been controversial even in the go-go 1990s, is going nowhere in a state that survived the fiscal year only by issuing \$11 bil-

lion in bonds to cover operating expenses and carrying a deficit greater than \$9 billion. The new budget actually cuts state funding for education by \$200 a student.

*Williams v. California*, a class-action lawsuit demanding that the state meet its constitutional obligation to provide at least the bare essentials needed for an education, offers a glimmer of hope. Although the state has spent more than \$18 million fighting the case, plaintiffs may well win, as it's hard to imagine Sacramento publicly rationalizing its failure to give textbooks to 2 million youngsters. Yet even if plaintiffs win the lawsuit, the impact isn't clear. It's one thing to secure a judicial ruling—or, more likely, to negotiate a consent decree—but much harder to bring about change on the ground.

Constitutional rights such as those asserted in the *Williams* case are supposed to trump practical considerations. But winning a lawsuit can't alter the fact that there's no money in the state treasury and little political will to improve life in classrooms. For now, at least, "Mississippification" remains as much an aspiration as a slur in the once-Golden State. ■

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# Bioterror Brain Drain

Infectious-disease specialists are following the big bucks to Washington's new multibillion-dollar program on bioterrorism research—but at what human cost?

BY MERRILL GOOZNER

DR. MARCUS HORWITZ, PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE AT THE University of California, Los Angeles, has devoted most of his career to finding a vaccine for tuberculosis. Though the age-old killer is well controlled in the industrialized world, TB kills more than 2 million people each year among the global poor. It's not a sexy field: Compared with funding for heart-disease, HIV/AIDS or cancer research, National Institutes of Health money for TB research is a minor blip. Applied research into potential TB cures and vaccines is not a priority for the agency, or for drug companies, which see no profitable market among the poor. Still, after 15 years of research funded mainly by the NIH, Horwitz's lab has finally come up with what could be the first improvement in TB vaccination technology in nearly a century. His vaccine is being tested among a small group of patients, and a nonprofit drug development organization funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is committed to sponsoring the full-blown efficacy trials if his early experiment proves successful.

So why, on the cusp of real progress, is Horwitz's lab phasing out its basic science research on TB in favor of studying tularemia, the bacterium spread by ticks and rodents that causes rabbit fever? Because tularemia is on the government's A-list of potential bioterrorism agents, put there because the United States and the former Soviet Union stockpiled it as a biological warfare agent during the Cold War. Today, Washington is throwing plenty of money at basic research of the pathogen even though it affects only a few hundred Americans a year, is relatively rare around the world and is easily treatable with common antibiotics. Even if it did fall into the hands of terrorists, the threat would hardly be grave: The disease is difficult to weaponize and, when treated, is fatal in fewer than 2 percent of cases. "Scientists call it money transferase," says Horwitz. In his case, the \$200,000 he's received annually to study one of the globe's most virulent killers, TB, will now mainly go to study a disease whose significance is primarily symbolic in the war on terrorism.

It's a scenario that's being played out across the country. Since the 2001 attacks, Congress has poured billions into bioterrorism research aimed at developing vaccines and drugs to combat the most likely threat agents. Indeed, the amount of money being directed at bioterrorism defense will soon make it the second-largest (after cancer) results-oriented medical-research program of the post-Cold War era. And that has led the tiny fraternity of research scientists who've devoted their lives to studying infectious disease to expand

or alter their research priorities in order to tap into the huge pot of money the government has set aside for bioterrorism research. Dr. Richard Guerrant, director of the Center for Global Health at the University of Virginia, for example, has tailored a few of his grants to win biodefense funding. "[Y]ou adopt what you do to attract the resources that are necessary," he said, adding that several of his colleagues at the center have shifted their "whole approach to tularemia and anthrax because of the availability of funding."

The drive to protect the nation against potential bioterrorism agents is having a major impact on the entire medical-research establishment. Direct spending on bioterrorism research and development by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (the lead NIH agency in bioterrorism defense research) and the Department of Defense soared from an annual \$250 million pre-anthrax attacks to well over \$2 billion this year, turning it almost overnight into a larger program than HIV/AIDS was in its heyday. By comparison, the NIH last year spent less than \$200 million on tuberculosis and malaria combined. Meanwhile, the rest of the nation's medical-research budget is facing its first restrictive environment in decades. The NIH's overall research budget will rise only at the rate of inflation next year—far below the double-digit increases of the Clinton years. The belt-tightening prompted virtually every medical school and patient-advocacy group in the country to sign full-page ads in *The Washington Post* last summer protesting the situation.

Meanwhile, Congress upped the ante this summer by quietly approving President George W. Bush's Project BioShield, a \$5.6 billion fund to purchase the fruits of biodefense research. The bill gives the administration the power to negotiate a fair market price for the new drugs and vaccines once the Department of Health and Human Services secretary has determined that there's no commercial market. The price will presumably be based on what the drug companies invested in order to come up with the as-yet-undiscovered therapeutics, plus the industry's standard rate of return—which, as *Fortune* magazine points out every year, ranks No. 1 among U.S. industries.

The idea behind BioShield is to entice for-profit pharmaceutical and biotech firms to invest in anti-terrorism therapeutics, as they've made it plain that they won't ride to the nation's rescue unless they're lured with a guaranteed payoff. Eli Lilly head Sidney Taurel, who recently drew fire from liberals on Capitol Hill for pushing for drug-industry liabil-



A tuberculosis vaccine will have to wait.

ity exemptions from his perch atop the Homeland Security Advisory Council, indecorously encapsulated the industry's attitude in his public testimony last year. "Government is not going to get new miracle drugs for cost plus 10 percent," he said. Unlike run-of-the-mill defense contractors, the very profitable drug companies appear to have better uses for their capital.

Even with this pot of gold at the end of the research-and-development rainbow, the path to a payoff will be long and tortuous. The biggest problem is scientific. Finding antidotes to infectious disease isn't easy. It will take years, in some cases decades, to develop new or more effective vaccines and drugs to combat anthrax, botulism, smallpox, tularemia and the other pathogens on the government's list of agents likely to be weaponized by nations or groups hoping to wreak havoc on the United States. No wonder major pharmaceutical companies are reluctant to dive in. Why invest in risky biodefense products when there are more lucrative heartburn-, allergy- and pain-relief markets to pursue? Republicans in Congress seemed to recognize the flaw in relying on the market to protect the public against bioterrorism. During the bill's markup last June, they slipped in an amendment allowing the government to manufacture the drugs and vaccines directly if procuring them from private contractors proves too costly.

Another problem is that even if these drugs were developed quickly, the effectiveness of the new therapeutics would remain in doubt. Most anti-bioterrorism drugs would never get the extensive clinical trial testing usually demanded by the Food and Drug Administration because there is no naturally occurring patient population on which to test them. Special exemptions have been built into the laws that allow

vaccines to gain approval with only limited safety testing. If the public's reluctance to line up for the smallpox vaccine is any guide, new biodefense vaccines would simply be put on the shelf for the day when a coordinated and large-scale bioterrorist attack makes the public receptive to mass inoculation. For many anti-bioterrorism agents, their first use would also be their first clinical trial.

Furthermore, a lot of the basic research money pouring into biodefense would be wasted on poor quality research. It's an inevitable outcome of the NIH peer-review process. Those familiar with the process say the closed-door panels divide applications into three piles: those that will get funded, those that will get funded if there's enough money and those in the "no way" pile. The sudden influx of funding inevitably means "you're reaching applications with less scientific merit," says Richard Ebright, who directs the chemistry lab at the Waksman Institute of Microbiology at Rutgers University. "There will be an enormous increase of people moving into bioterrorism, particularly people who have difficulty getting their grants funded." A similar process is under way in the private sector. Small biotechnology companies running out of venture capital are abandoning other projects to apply to the NIH for the small-business components of the anti-bioterrorism program.

Most disappointing of all, the majority of the applied research supported by the government—the actual development of candidate drugs and vaccines for potential bioterrorism agents—would have little effect on the diseases that pose the gravest threat to humankind. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and a leading figure in the na-



tion's biodefense effort, claims there will be many "spin-offs" from beefing up bioterrorism defense research. He argues on the agency's Web site that "NIAID research on organisms with bioterror potential will almost certainly lead to an enhanced understanding of other more common and naturally occurring infectious diseases that afflict people here and abroad," like TB and malaria. But enhanced understanding is not a cure. Vaccine research is almost always pathogen specific, as are most new drugs to combat viral diseases. And the number of people worldwide who suffer from smallpox, botulism, Ebola or anthrax in the absence of deliberate poisonings wouldn't fill up the tuberculosis ward in a small African city. "It's distracting from global health," said Dr. Carol Nacy, founder of the Sequella Global Tuberculosis Foundation (which will fund Horwitz's large-scale TB trial) and now head of a small biotech firm researching TB drugs. "We'll learn some things [from bioterrorism research] that are relevant, but not much."

So far, she seems to be right. Far from pursuing spinoff, many scientists are shifting their priorities to follow the money. Johnny Peterson, a professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, has been studying cholera since his graduate-student days in the late 1960s. Periodic outbreaks of dehydrating diarrhoeal diseases like cholera and dysentery kill

coming ineffective due to resistance brought on by over-prescription, improper use and the inevitable mutations of wily microbes.

But who will own these new antibiotics? And who will test them against diseases like multidrug resistant TB, a growing global threat? Unlike their use as anti-bioterrorism agents, these new drugs will have to be tested against each specific disease before regulators here or abroad allow them into widespread use. And the basic economics of who conducts such tests will not be changed by BioShield's purchasing of biodefense research: Only testing for use against potential terrorism agents will be funded; research into secondary uses will not. For their part, the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries have not invested in developing drugs for the major infectious disease killers for the same reasons they under invest in rare diseases in the United States: there's no market. For diseases like malaria, leishmaniasis and cholera, the market's absence isn't defined by the small number of patients but by the fact that the millions of patients have no money. Testing a new antibiotic that is effective against anthrax to see if it is also effective against tuberculosis will require that it be tested against tuberculosis. And that will require money that no drug company wants to spend. It would be a terrible denouement for the spinoff promise if the new and untested anti-terrorism drugs get stockpiled in

## **Many scientists who have devoted their lives to studying infectious diseases are abandoning their research and shifting their priorities to follow the money.**

an estimated 2 million children around the world every year because their bodies are so severely weakened by a lack of fluids and undernourishment, according to the Population Resource Center. (While those numbers aren't relatively large, cholera is a serious problem because children who survive it almost always suffer long-term damage.) Peterson has spent decades looking for compounds that block the bacterium's toxin, which leads to diarrhea, dehydration and death, and he's come up with at least one. But last year he saw that the compound might also block the related anthrax toxin, so he applied for a grant to study that. "We're trying to make hay when the sun is out," Peterson said. While he's hiring more scientists and will continue studying the basic science of cholera, his plans to seek a grant to apply his work to potential cholera therapeutics have been put on hold. "Perhaps we can pursue it in the future," he said.

There will be some positive spinoffs from increased biodefense spending, to be sure. Money hopefully will get channeled into rebuilding the nation's network of public-health clinics, which were created to cope with the epidemics that ravaged America's cities over a century ago. The recent SARS outbreak reminded everyone of the importance of having an infrastructure able to rapidly diagnose and understand newly emerging diseases. There will also be a major hunt for new "broad spectrum" antibiotics—drugs that are effective against a range of bacterial diseases including those that actually infect large numbers of people. There will be new research tools developed that can be deployed in the hunt for cures or vaccines for any infectious disease. This is especially important in an era when older antibiotics are rapidly be-

military warehouses while scientists who want to test them on sick populations can't because they don't have the rights or the money to conduct the tests.

One way to get around this problem would be for the government to earmark a good portion of the \$2 billion-plus for anti-bioterrorism research—say, one-quarter of it—for targeted research and development toward new therapeutics to combat the great neglected diseases that kill millions each year. This will not detract from the war on bioterrorism; it will enhance it. How? Spinoff works in both directions. A new antibiotic that cures multidrug resistant TB may be just what we need for the day when a mad scientist-terrorist figures out a way to aerosolize tularemia over one of our cities. And unlike some new antibiotic developed with that remote bioterrorism threat in mind, the new antibiotic will have been tested in large clinical trials, so its side effects will be well characterized. And it's not only good science, it's good politics. As one scientist put it, by joining the fight against the infectious diseases ravaging the developing world, the United States can help drain the swamp that breeds terrorists. "[I]t is a very clear way to address ideologically the threat of bioterrorism," said Guerrant of the Center for Global Health. "If we can do something about diarrhea or malaria, that will affect my children's future security better than anything else we can do." ■

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MERRILL GOOZNER, a Washington-based writer, is the author of the forthcoming *The \$800 Million Pill: Public Research, Private Profit and the Truth About Pharmaceutical Innovation*.

# Currents

## MEDIA



Bobo on the spot: Questions abound for the popular conservative.

## Brooks No Argument

A closer look at the *Times*' newest columnist

BY TODD GITLIN

DAVID BROOKS IS HAVING AN EXCELLENT decade. As he might have put it in his breezy, best-selling *Bobos in Paradise*, he's the Restoration Hardware of conservative punditry, the Starbucks of insouciant moderation. Indeed, with his frequent appearances in *Newsweek*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and other magazines, not to mention his regular TV gig, Brooks might seem to have franchised himself. At *The Weekly Standard*, amid much drollery and pontificating, he has done what more pundits should do: report. On Jim Lehrer's *NewsHour*, Brooks has astutely personified suburban conservatism with a human face, squaring off every Friday against the older, more rumped, more urban Mark Shields. Perhaps it's a camera-angle fluke, but when Brooks gazes at Shields, he looks like the perfect student—attentive, respectful, at times

a bit pained but politely waiting his turn before delivering his zinger. Better than anyone else in circulation, Brooks has mastered the high-pundit style of underplaying his overstatements.

Unlike other conservatives who give good and frequent screen, Brooks doesn't much sneer, deliver intelligence scoops, or traffic in down-and-dirty gossip. The smile that creeps over his lips as he gets off a mot of chastisement is pleasantly self-regarding: *Look, ma, no guilt*. Brooks is the nice Jewish boy as puckish Teddy Roosevelt admirer, a conservative you can bring home to your liberal parents.

When he was at *The Wall Street Journal* in the early 1990s, a time when conservatives had convinced themselves that Hollywood and the Ivy League were enemies worthy of burning, Brooks glee-

fully pounced on goofy professorspeak with a bright eye for the malodorous absurdity. Today the caricaturist has lost none of his satirical knack, but the barbs he flings at the barbarians are more likely to appear as inserts within more sweeping polemics against terrorists and the liberals who misunderstand them. ("Stand up and oppose the war, conservatives observe, and you'll probably win an Oscar, a National Magazine Award, and tenure at four dozen prestigious universities," he wrote recently in *The Weekly Standard*.) The overkill is ingratiating: *Just kidding. Sort of*. If you think a half-cocked English professor is as predatory as an American corporation fleeing our shores to save taxes, David Brooks is your man.

In *Bobos in Paradise*, a clever exercise in what he called "comic sociology," Brooks was the bemused minstrel of the bohemian-bourgeois hybrid, the felicitously named Bobo, that ubiquitous type who brought the counterculture into the corporation and reduced cosmopolitan liberalism to a taste for lattes. Brooks giggled watching his Bobos Stairmaster themselves into a sweat, but in the end found more there to admire than to deplore. The fervor of the educated class is the engine of wealth, and wealth is the foundation of all good things, so long live the Bobo.

Bobos unimpressed by Paul Krugman's crusades will relish Brooks' new appointment as an op-ed columnist at *The New York Times*. Stationed at column right, he's likely to outlast William Safire, whose career-long cover-up exercises on behalf of Richard Nixon, Ariel Sharon and various intelligence sources have made no small contribution to Republican morale over his 30 years on the page (though Safire has also broken ranks to display a tender spot for civil liberties). Brooks, despite his Washington years, probably won't channel insider talk with Safire's gusto. What besides good



fun can he bring to his coveted niche?

Here's one idea: "national greatness conservatism." In a co-authored 1997 *Wall Street Journal* piece, Brooks and William Kristol updated Teddy Roosevelt's nationalism to include "a neo-Reaganite foreign policy of national strength and moral assertiveness abroad." They advocated using "federal power to preserve and enhance our national patrimony—the parks, buildings, and monuments that are the physical manifestations of our common heritage." And they weren't "unfriendly to government, properly understood." "Efforts to get big government off our backs, to strengthen families and to invigorate are healthy responses to the threat" of "the complacent mediocrity and petty meddling of the nanny state. But they are insufficient without the ambitions and endeavors of a conservatism committed to national greatness."

Question One for Brooks: Will his penchant for national greatness continue to get in the way of his satirical eye—which doesn't penetrate to the spectacle of George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld trying to rule Iraq, or Bush purporting to stand for "no child left behind" while leaving the states to their fiscal crises and tamping domestic spending?

Question Two: How far does he want to go with his privatizing passion? Brooks and Kristol wanted to "bust the great public trusts of our time—the education, health and Social Security monopolies." How amusing it would be to see him defend Social Security privatization now that the stock-market bubble is long popped. Brooks complained in a June 2002 *Weekly Standard* editorial that "conservatism, even with a conservative president, has lost some of its insurgent energy and has become corporatist"—though this is not one of his major themes on the *NewsHour*. Will he have the nerve to say so in front of a larger public, and to name names? It's interesting that "mediocrity" ranks high on the above list of evils. (Brooks is nothing if not a meritocrat.) It would be even more interesting to see him wrestle with the problem of what is to be done about the mediocre ambitions of the *private* economy. Now that Brooks is off Rupert Murdoch's payroll, will he strike a blow for the higher morality against the sleaze and lies that Murdoch pipes into

America every day? Or will such indignation strike him as a gift to liberals?

Government lies and self-hypnosis do not seem to interest Brooks when done by Republican chiefs. In fact, to date, he has shown himself to be substantially innocent of the ways of American power. At his best, he is a close student of something he often confuses with power: prestige. The foundation executive, professor, journalist, banker, broker and CEO are, to him, brothers and sisters under the skin. Together they rule, and deserve to rule, for they do a good job for the yokels. "Unlike Washington activists or academic polemicists, most Americans live in the world of corporate America."

Thus—and factually Brooks is right about this—no populist revolt materialized when the corporate scandals hit the fan. If meritocracy is triumphant, all appeals to economic justice can be dismissed as class warfare—and the self-engorgement of the owning class can be defended as the proper course of the propertied. But wouldn't more benefits for the gardeners, nannies and Chinese sneaker makers who keep up the Bobos' standard of living do wonders for national greatness?

A pity that, although he (and Kristol) supported John McCain in the 2000 Republican race, Brooks ends up appealing to the faux-populist resentment that prefers the tarnished, silver-spooned,

know-nothing George W. Bush to the vast population of meritocratic scientists who persist in warning against global warming. When the political stakes are high, Brooks goes with national feebleness.

Finally, Brooks would be more compelling, less callow, if he were more curious about the rest of the world and more open to its complaints about American power. Is everyone who worries about Bush's belligerence really a shill for Saddam Hussein or the Saudi sheiks? Bobos are supposed to be pragmatists, not revolutionaries; so are there no practical impediments to our greatness expeditions? Moreover, Brooks seems to have lived in Europe for several years without developing much appreciation for how anyone else does things. Long vacations, small cars, strong unions, socialized medicine—these give him little pause. Does great America have so little to learn?

One roots for the satirist. It will be enjoyable to read Brooks over the coming years, urging conservatives to cut loose from the Saudi Wahhabites' oil. But it would be instructive to see him try to draw the line between greatness and smugness. ■

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TODD GITLIN is a professor of journalism and sociology at Columbia University and the author of *Letters to a Young Activist*.

## MEDIA

# Exporting Censorship to Iraq

The press system we allow the Iraqis is far from free.

BY ALEX COUREVITCH

FROM THE START, PROBLEMS SMALL and large plagued the Pentagon's media project in Iraq. The Iraqi Media Network (IMN), as it is known, is an American-run outfit contracted by the Pentagon to put out news after Saddam Hussein's fall. Its mission was twofold: to be both a PBS-style broadcaster and a means for the occupying authorities to communicate with Iraqis. But getting going wasn't easy. There were bombed-out facilities to reconstruct, transmitters to build, and a staff to hire and rehire when many left for better wages as interpreters or trans-

lators. Tapes didn't match with recording machines; recording machines didn't match with broadcasting equipment. There were power outages and battery shortages, and no money to buy new programming. "We were even using the videotape collection of [Hussein's sons] Uday and Qusay," says Don North, a senior TV adviser to the IMN.

Those problems led to more problems. Ahmad al-Rikabi, a former London bureau chief of Radio Free Iraq, quit as head of IMN TV and returned to London because he thought the IMN was allotted

The contradiction between encouraging democratic values and ruling by force was built into the IMN's very origins. Early this year, the Pentagon hired

The IMN has also said that it wants to take over the offices of the independent television broadcasting station in Mosul. In early May, the Pentagon wanted to

Much of this is the result of the American authority's confusion over the IMN's purpose: Can it be both the occupiers' mouthpiece and a PBS-style network at the same time? Even Furlong, who was program manager for the first three months and generally supports U.S. efforts in Iraq, admits there is a conceptual problem. "Both roles can't be done by the same animal," he says. John Langlois, senior media adviser for USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, agrees, saying, "IMN or any other entity that must act as



a voice for a governing authority is always going to have difficulty coming across as an objective public broadcaster."

The Iraqis aren't waiting for the Americans to figure all this out. Many private media have already developed since Hussein's downfall. At the same time, some of these have proven decidedly hostile to their purported liberators: In July, for example, the Shia newspaper *Al-Mustaqila* ran an article headlined "Death to all spies and those who cooperate with the U.S.; killing them is a religious duty." How should the Americans respond to such threats? Bremer's team has erred on the side of caution rather than liberty. In June, Bremer issued a nine-point list of "prohibited activity" that included incitement to violence, support for the Baath Party, and publishing material that is patently false and calculated to promote opposition to the occupying authority. According to the Index on Censorship, Maj. Gen. David Petraeus admitted to reporters in Iraq that "what we are looking at is censorship, but you can censor something that is intended to inflame passions." Under these rules, *Al-Mustaqila*, after running its anti-American article, was closed down.

But according to a number of observers inside and outside Iraq, other cases have not been so clear cut, the appeals process has been practically nonexistent and the CPA rules are written so broadly that they could ban almost any criticism of the American authority. This summer, an Iraqi newspaper in Najaf and radio station in Baghdad were closed, though the administration reveals few details about why. In another case, an Iraqi newspaper published an article comparing Bremer to Hussein—but anonymously, for fear it would be interpreted as an incitement. "I suspect that they often don't understand how journalism works," says North about the occupying authority. Indeed, Bremer issued his rules in part as a response to a false story about soldiers raping two Iraqi girls, even though the newspaper that ran the story fired the responsible reporters when the error was discovered. It would be better, advises North, to meet speech with counter-speech rather than the censor's gavel. Not to mention that closing down media outlets may do more to inflame passions than letting them publish amid the sea of independent outfits.

The occupying authority has taken some of these criticisms to heart. It is now developing an independent media commission, run by journalists rather than the U.S. Army, to enforce Bremer's rules more judiciously and to develop a more rational set of media regulations. Still, the commission will have its limits. That's because the real problem isn't that the Iraqis don't understand the need for media regulation; it's that the regulations are not a product of the will and interests of the Iraqis themselves. And that's a problem that's likely to en-

sure as long as the Americans are the ones doing the regulating. According to the Index on Censorship, Bremer, reflecting on the new freedoms in Iraq, told journalists in June there that they were no longer constrained by the government and were now "free to criticize whoever, or whatever, you want."

Except, of course, the liberators themselves. ■

ALEX GOUREVITCH is a graduate student at Columbia University and a former Prospect writing fellow.

## BOOKS

# The Nixon Enigma

BY DRAKE BENNETT

NIXON'S SHADOW: THE HISTORY OF AN IMAGE

BY DAVID GREENBERG • W. W. NORTON & COMPANY • 384 PAGES • \$26.95

IN THE OPENING PAGES OF *NIXON Agonistes*, his peripatetic meditation on the 1968 presidential campaign, Garry Wills recalls watching Richard Nixon give a stump speech in a small town in Wisconsin:

I am off to one side, where I see nothing but shadow bent distortedly onto the wall by insistent television lights—shadows, rather, since the angled lights give him one dark silhouette and a lighter "ghost" askew of it. Doubled hands rise and dip beside the haloed body, or flail in ghost gestures through it—six dim grades of shadows, weaving elusive canons, visual echoes like the sound of "Tricky Dicky," fiction pictures.

Later, interviewing Nixon in the darkness of his campaign plane, Wills is struck by the contrast: "Out in the light, he had splintered into shadows. Here in shadow he solidified, drew himself together, stopped gesturing." In the dark, the many Nixons, the silhouettes and ghosts, resolved themselves into something of substance.

David Greenberg, a historian and a columnist for the online magazine *Slate*, might caution Wills about presuming to see anything more authentic in the shadows than in the glare of the klieg lights. Greenberg's new book, *Nixon's Shadow*, is, its subtitle proclaims, "The History of an Image." Of course, like Wills—and like

nearly everyone who has written about Nixon since Watergate—Greenberg sees his subject as a shadowy man. Although he doesn't quote Wills on Nixon's "splintered" shadow, Greenberg draws on the same visual vocabulary, not least for his title. But he is primarily concerned with tracing the shadows Nixon threw, not plumbing the man's dim inner depths. The customary goal of biography, especially presidential biography (and most especially Nixon biography), is to give the inside story. Greenberg, on the contrary, stays determinedly at the surface.

The book isn't simply a postmodern game of unpin the signifier. As Greenberg announces in his introduction, he is not making "an idealist argument that truth consists solely in our perception of it." The whole question of which was the "true" Nixon falls outside the scope of the work. Its ultimate quarry is not Nixon but the politicians, journalists, historians and voters who read their own beliefs and biases into him. Like a chemist with a centrifuge, Greenberg painstakingly separates the component parts of Nixon's muddled public persona, then uses the myriad images as tracers to map the contours of the society that shaped and was shaped by Nixon's long career.

Each of the book's eight chapters is dedicated to a different Nixon avatar and

those who believed in it. Some are more familiar than others: There's a chapter on "Tricky Dick" and the '50s liberals who despised him, and another on the New Left radicals and the soulless conspirator of their nightmares. But there's also the statesman eventually accepted by the foreign-policy establishment, and the Nixon posthumously recast as an unlikely liberal by a new generation of historians. The groups that cohere around each image are not necessarily defined by political views: Greenberg dedicates one of the longest chapters to the White House press corps, for example, and another to Nixon's "psychobiographers." He has arranged the different images so that he can also tell, in something like chronological order, the story of Nixon's political life and afterlife, as seen by the many audiences Nixon played to. But Greenberg also emphasizes the overlaps, examining Nixon's famed "Checkers" speech, for example, or his resignation, in *Rashomon*-like revisitations.

Perhaps the most fascinating chapter is the first, where Nixon is introduced as a young candidate, the long-awaited congressional savior of the Republicans of California's 12th district. Greenberg's account of that first campaign shows not only how Nixon sold himself to his beloved "silent majority," it also writes him back into the history of postwar American conservatism. Most historians tend to buy the right's own founding narrative, a long, lonely struggle that began with F.A. Hayek's libertarian manifesto *The Road to Serfdom* and William F. Buckley Jr.'s launching of the *National Review*, gained momentum up through Barry Goldwater's failed presidential bid and reached its apotheosis with Ronald Reagan's election as president. Nixon has been expunged from this narrative, partly out of spite for his apostasies (creating the Environmental Protection Agency, supporting the Family Assistance Plan, going to China), partly out of embarrassment at his crimes.

But, as Greenberg shows, it was Nixon, as much as any other politician, who imbued conservatism with the populist streak that saved it from languishing as an outdated political creed for the wealthy. Greenberg writes, "Nixon pioneered the use of populist language and imagery in the service of free-market economics long before the Reagan revolution, before the much-celebrated 'back-

lash' against the liberal indulgences of the 1960s ... When Nixon spoke about 'the forgotten man' in 1968, he was not cribbing from George Wallace. He was cribbing from his own speeches in 1946."

Curiously enough, some of Nixon's most implacable enemies also tended to minimize his importance. For the New Left of the 1960s and 1970s, especially its more leftward wing, Nixon was a liar, a fascist, a crook and, in Vietnam and Cambodia, a mass murderer—but he was not the real problem. In their eyes he was a symptom, the inevitable product of a corrupt, undemocratic system. Greenberg traces how this paradox of "reviling Nixon while downgrading his culpability" led many in the New Left right out of politics. Tellingly, some of the most deeply alienated among them turned to baroque and far-fetched conspiracy theories linking Nixon to everything from a suspicious airplane crash to John F. Kennedy's assassination. In the face of pervasive political phoniness, "the radical search for truth"—no matter how ridiculous the conclusions—"became the vehicle for rediscovering the authentic."

For Greenberg, the New Left conspiracists serve as a sort of cautionary tale. The overall effect of *Nixon's Shadow* is cumulative rather than synthetic, and its tone of assiduous equivocation can occasionally give the impression of a history written by committee. But Greenberg does have a larger argument, stated at the outset and implicit throughout: that

treating politics as "a quest for authenticity" is as futile as it is ineffectual. He writes, "The ways that we respond to public figures, the feelings they evoke, the interpretations they invite, the meanings they embody—these aren't shadows cast upon a cavern wall but the stuff of political experience itself." To decry the gloss and noise of contemporary politics only betrays "an unwillingness to reckon with the realities of modernity." After all, "[T]he pictures we hold of politicians are rarely just manufactured and foisted upon us. They emerge from a dialectical or collaborative process between politicians and their audiences."

Greenberg is not the first to make this point, just as Nixon was not the first politician to understand it, but it bears repeating at a time when there is so much hand-wringing and ink-spilling over the right's interlocking media empires and its "message discipline." By describing with such care and intelligence just how mutable, contingent and finally uncontrollable political images are, Greenberg belies the portrait of a gullible polity held in thrall by Orwellian media puppeteers. Greenberg pays no attention to the Nixon behind the curtain, but he tells us plenty about the strings he pulled. As Nixon was well aware, though, they pull both ways. ■

DRAKE BENNETT is a freelance writer living in Boston and a former Prospect writing fellow.

## BOOKS

# Mission Unlimited

BY STEPHEN KOTKIN

THE MISSION: WAGING WAR AND KEEPING THE PEACE WITH AMERICA'S MILITARY BY DANA PRIEST • W. W. NORTON & COMPANY • 384 PAGES • \$26.95

A PRINCIPAL DEFICIENCY OF THE ARGUMENT against the Iraq War was that the war's opponents, like the first Bush administration, would have left a brutal tyranny in power. Who wanted to side with Saddam Hussein? A crucial shortcoming of the pro-war argument was that the United States was unprepared to handle the challenges of a war's aftermath. Why topple a contained dictator only to create further misery and instability, fol-

lowed by the reassertion of malevolent institutions, personnel and habits?

This striking phenomenon of an America eager and able to unseat shameful regimes (some, former clients) but unwilling and perhaps unable to build replacement democracies was showcased in Afghanistan, for anyone interested. But the catch-22 remains largely overlooked. As long as the domestic costs are so slight and the duties



are shouldered by so narrow a demographic—the soldiery represents around 1 percent of the U.S. population—we probably won't have a robust civics debate about what American global power should aim to do and what it realistically can accomplish.

One thing seems clear: There's no military solution. Ask virtually anyone about any of the world's challenges and that's the mantra they will likely intone. And yet, as *Washington Post* reporter Dana Priest emphasizes in her new book, the Pentagon serves as U.S. policymakers' all-purpose default instrument. Such militarization resulted from the Cold War, of course, but when the Cold War ended, inchoate programs for fostering democracy and market reform abroad seemed to come to the fore, under the aegis of the State Department's USAID program and the Treasury Department's efforts through the International Monetary Fund.

## **The post-Cold War United States cries out for both military transformation and demilitarization.**

### **Fat chance, on either account, especially the second.**

In fact, according to Priest, the addiction to the military mushroomed during Bill Clinton's presidency, despite his anti-war past and the fiasco over gays in the military, because the early Clinton White House proved indecisive on foreign affairs. Then an intern and a special prosecutor drove Congress to distraction. And all the while, the State Department further atrophied. In the 1970s and '80s, the department's budget declined 20 percent, and U.S. diplomatic personnel shrank 22 percent.

The Pentagon did better. Priest neglects to provide the numbers, but the State Department's outlay today barely tops \$8 billion. Pentagon finances approach \$400 billion, not including the Iraq War and subsequent occupation. The upshot is that the resource-rich military's "mission" has expanded not just to anti-terrorism but to drug interdiction, natural-disaster relief and the escorting of children to kindergarten.

The post-Cold War United States cries out for both military transformation and demilitarization. Fat chance, on either account, especially the second. In the mean-

time, Priest offers an exceptionally timely and firsthand, albeit nonanalytic, look at the Pentagon's willy-nilly nation building, primarily seen through the eyes of America's commanders in chief, or "CinCs" (pronounced "sinks").

CinCs came into being in 1958 as part of protracted efforts to overcome the service rivalries that had contributed to being surprised at Pearl Harbor. Service rivalries persisted, however, and so in 1986 the CinCs were granted greater authority, including the power to direct all operations in their "theaters." Operationally, of today's five regional CinCs, two can be traced to the American occupations of Germany (Europe) and Japan (Pacific). A third (Southern) grew from U.S. involvement in Latin America. A fourth (Central) was born with the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The last (Northern) arose in connection with homeland security, which came after Priest did much of her reporting.

Beginning in 1999, she interviewed the then four regional CinCs, all now retired: Gen. Anthony Zinni (Central), Adm. Dennis Blair (Pacific), Gen. Charles Wilhelm (Southern) and Gen. Wesley Clark (Europe), who, by dint of position, also served as supreme allied commander of NATO.

In a book full of men wounded in Vietnam, Zinni gets the starring role. "Countries turned to him to stop chronic civil wars, uproot terrorism, cure starvation and arrest what they saw as the dangerous course of American isolationism," Priest gushes. "He met with African kings and princes, emirs, presidents and prime ministers, defense chiefs and military officers. Zinni chuckled that he had become a modern-day proconsul, descendant of the warrior statesmen who ruled the Roman Empire's outlying territory."

Priest loses her head in the fantastic pomp of the CinCs, who travel "unmatched in grandeur by those of any other U.S. government official except the president and a few cabinet secretaries." But she also notes their quotidian power derives from populous training programs

for foreign military officers and sheer territorial sweep. The bailiwicks of ambassadors, not to mention most CIA station chiefs, consist of a single nation. Zinni's "CinCdom"—which Tommy Franks inherited in 2000—encompasses 25 countries, from the former Soviet Central Asia (moved from "Europe" to "Central" in 1999) to the Horn of Africa. The Pacific Command carries responsibility for 43 countries, with 60 percent of the earth's population, and "Europe" stretches in a vast arc from the South African Cape to the Russian Far East. The overshadowed Southern CinC still employs more experts on Latin American matters "than the Departments of State, Commerce, Treasury, and Agriculture, the Pentagon's Joint Staff, and the office of the secretary of defense combined."

Not surprisingly, these "kingly CinCs"—as the imperious Donald Rumsfeld branded them—see the world as a connected whole and strive to "shape" it in peacetime. But as Priest's accumulated anecdotes demonstrate, activist CinCs got ensnared in their regions' and Washington's labyrinths.

Less illuminating are Priest's middle chapters recounting what appear to be subtly controlled "visits" to super-secretive U.S. Special Forces, but in the book's final section, on the Balkans, her pastiche throws up additional insights. She reminds us that Bosnia never got a unified body to coordinate civilian reconstruction, with predictably lamentable results, foreshadowing Afghanistan. Iraq does have a unified civilian authority, but thus far without an appreciable difference. In Kosovo, the National Security Agency set up state-of-the-art electronics in camouflage tents to eavesdrop on Pristina and Belgrade, but "couldn't see what was happening down the block."

Still more revealing, Priest catches the anger and distrust some American grunts felt toward their Kosovar Albanian wards, a Muslim population. Rarely do we hear so frankly from rank-and-file implementers of nation building, though who knows how representative such comments are? Neither the troops nor their superiors had any familiarity with the local languages and history, not to mention with police functions. "The Army has since spent millions training troops about searches, civilian crowd control, traffic checkpoints, and respect for oth-

ers," she points out, but "the mission remains baffling to many soldiers." Priest captures uniformed men and women on the ground making U.S. foreign policy, or struggling to do so.

The past decade has seen a dramatic shift in American impulses. The Clinton syndrome of being terrified of using military force yet eventually opting for humanitarian intervention yielded to a Bush syndrome of idolizing military action while abhorring nation building. With Iraq, Bush radicals are being confronted by the unwanted consequences of their muscularity, and Clinton alumni are again being shown the limits of do-goodism. Remarkably, however, even as the right deeply divides (remake the world versus cautiously select engagements), many lefties and righties have found common imperialist cause save for method (act with the

rest of the world or without it).

But effective mechanisms for consolidating interventions remain elusive. Priest, rather than reflecting on the limits and ill effects of even the best-intentioned foreign tutelage, bemoans only the overreliance on the Pentagon—as if it weren't structural. "Twelve years of reluctant nation-building," she admonishes of the Cold War's aftermath, "and the United States still hadn't spawned an effective civilian corps of aids workers, agronomists, teachers, engineers—a real peace corps—to take charge of postwar reconstruction in Afghanistan or anywhere else."

The "mission," indeed. ■

STEPHEN KOTKIN's *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* has been published in a revised paperback.

personal touches, and—voilà!—the A's found a way to win with little money.

Lewis' story is fascinating and certainly tells part of the truth. But Lewis also gets carried away with his thesis at points, gets confused at others and misinforms at still others. (For example, not all minor leaguers are under reserve for seven years, Jason Grimsley does not throw 96-mph fastballs and the players' union did not create the blue-ribbon panel on baseball economics.)

After arguing for chapters that Beane's system is based on an exhaustive absorption and interpretation of statistics and then stating that one of Beane's five basic rules is, "Know exactly what every player in baseball is worth to you. You can put a dollar figure on it," Lewis tells us that "[Beane's] approach to the market for baseball players [is] by its nature unsystematic." Either there is a system or there isn't; Lewis can't have it both ways. It's also not clear whether Beane's math has much to do with the A's success over the last three years—for example, none of his top picks in the 2002 amateur draft, which Lewis describes in approving detail, has yet panned out.

Lewis implies that if the lowly A's can be so successful, money imbalances among teams don't really matter. Surely good management is important, but you have to be daydreaming in the outfield not to realize that a team's chances of winning are greatly increased by doubling or tripling its payroll (think Yankees). The statistical relationship between payroll and winning percentage has been significant at the 1-percent level every year since 1994. Moreover, as more and more teams apply the appreciable insights of James and others, the early advantage attained by Alderson and Beane will fade. Contrarianism does not work so well when the majority adopts it. In the end, a synthesis of past and present systems of player evaluation likely will emerge.

So, *Moneyball* is imperfect. But it's a good read and it offers a revealing look at an important side of baseball's business. ■

ANDREW ZIMBALIST, *the Robert A. Woods Professor of Economics at Smith College, is the author of* *May the Best Team Win: Baseball Economics and Public Policy*.

## BOOKS

# The American Game

BY ANDREW ZIMBALIST

**MONEYBALL: THE ART OF WINNING AN UNFAIR GAME**

BY MICHAEL LEWIS • W.W. NORTON & COMPANY • 288 PAGES • \$24.95

BACK IN 1922, THE U.S. SUPREME Court, in its infinite wisdom, declared that Major League Baseball was not involved in interstate commerce and, hence, was exempt from federal antitrust laws. In 1952 and 1972 the Court reaffirmed this judgment, and, as a result, baseball remains an unregulated, legal monopoly. This immunity from the normal discipline of the marketplace has bred managerial arrogance, laxity and inefficiency. Michael Lewis' new book, *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game*, shows us one more way this has been true.

Lewis tells the story of how the Oakland Athletics, on a shoestring budget, have become a successful team. The basic message is that baseball's front offices have been so woefully ineffective and wasteful that a grain of common sense and rudimentary analysis can yield a winning team, even with a low payroll.

According to Lewis, until A's General Manager Sandy Alderson discovered the work of Bill James and other saber-

metricians in the mid-1990s, baseball's system of player development, selection and strategy was based on hackneyed folklore. For instance, basic statistical analysis shows that on-base percentage (hits plus walks divided by at bats) is a far more important offensive category than batting average alone or slugging percentage (which gives two points for a double, three for a triple and so on), yet most general managers paid little attention to it. Similarly, the standard fielding percentage is a poor measure of defensive performance because it only records putouts, assists and errors on balls that the fielder reaches, giving no credit to a fielder with greater range or better positioning instincts.

Armed with a fresh data arsenal and limited by a diminutive budget, Alderson created a new baseball culture in the A's front office and promoted a contrarian philosophy. He hired and schooled Billy Beane in the new system, which Beane, along with his hired hands from Harvard, developed further. Beane added some



# The Real Supply Side

BY ROBERT B. REICH

It's no secret that the nation's public schools are confronting their worst budget crisis in decades. Blame it on the combination of a lousy economy, state and local budget cuts, and unfunded federal mandates. The result is that many of America's 50 million

public-school kids are going back to overcrowded classrooms, older and rattier textbooks, meager school supplies, fewer school libraries, less school sports and arts, and canceled after-school programs. Teachers are being laid off all over the country. Here in Boston, for example, five public schools have recently been closed and 400 teachers let go.

America's school budget crisis couldn't come at a worse time. The No Child Left Behind Act is just kicking in. It uses standardized tests to hold schools accountable for student achievement. If any poor racial or demographic group fails to advance for two consecutive years, the school has to offer tutoring and give parents the option of transferring their kids to a higher-scoring school.

We can debate whether this sort of accountability is a good idea. The danger with high-stakes testing, of course, is that schools become test-taking factories in which the only thing taught or learned is how to take high-stakes tests.

Yet this isn't a one-size-fits-all economy anymore; mass-production jobs are going the way of the family farm. If young people are to grow into successful adults in this new economy, they'll have to learn how to think in a variety of ways, solve new problems and become quick learners in unfamiliar situations.

What's beyond debate, however, is the fact that a large number of children from poor families aren't getting the basics they need. Poverty is becoming ever more geographically concentrated, with the result being that local school districts in poor areas don't have nearly the revenues to counterbalance the compounding negative consequences of having a lot of poor kids together in the same schools. Title 1, the federal program designed to provide additional funding for poor districts, is woefully behind this perilous trend line.

Not even the No Child Left Behind Act is getting adequate federal funding. In order for millions of disadvantaged children to pass standardized tests, schools need extra resources to help them along. And schools that fail need extra funding for the mandated tutoring, plus the added costs of transporting students to other schools. But the federal government isn't coming up with nearly as much money as it promised when the act was passed. So far,

federal appropriations are almost a third less than what was authorized, about \$6 billion under the mark. As a result, a lot of the act's cost is falling on the states and cities, which can't possibly afford it.

The federal government, remember, is deep in the red. Next year's deficit is already approaching a record \$500 billion. The heart of George W. Bush's domestic policy is his \$1.7 trillion in tax cuts, which, as we know by now, go mostly to wealthy families. No reputable economist believes they will stimulate the economy, for the obvious reason that rich families already spend what they want to spend. That's the very definition of being rich. The only conceivable justification for these tax cuts goes under the rubric of "supply-side economics." The theory is that the rich will invest the extra money they get from the tax cuts in new factories and equipment, thereby growing the American economy. The fallacy here is that we're in a global economy, and the money the rich save by not paying taxes is as likely to go to East Asia or Europe in search of high returns as it is to America.

The only asset that's truly American, and likely to stay right here, is our people. I'm referring specifically to their capacity to be productive in the future because they have the education and knowledge they need. This is why skimping on our schools is bad, not just for the kids who now get stuck in larger classrooms with fewer teachers but also for the future of the American economy.

I'm not one to get bent out of shape about deficits, especially when the economy has so much underutilized capacity. But it makes absolutely no sense to give tax benefits to people at the top and simultaneously fail to fund our schools. State and local budgets are tight mainly because the economy is still struggling to break out of recession, and because states and cities don't have adequate revenues. Poor districts are especially strapped because their own tax bases have shriveled. Federal funding for poor schools needs to be dramatically expanded. The No Child Left Behind Act requires a lot more money behind it.

It's a simple lesson the Bush administration and the Republican Congress should have learned by now: The real supply side lies not with financial capital but with human capital. ■



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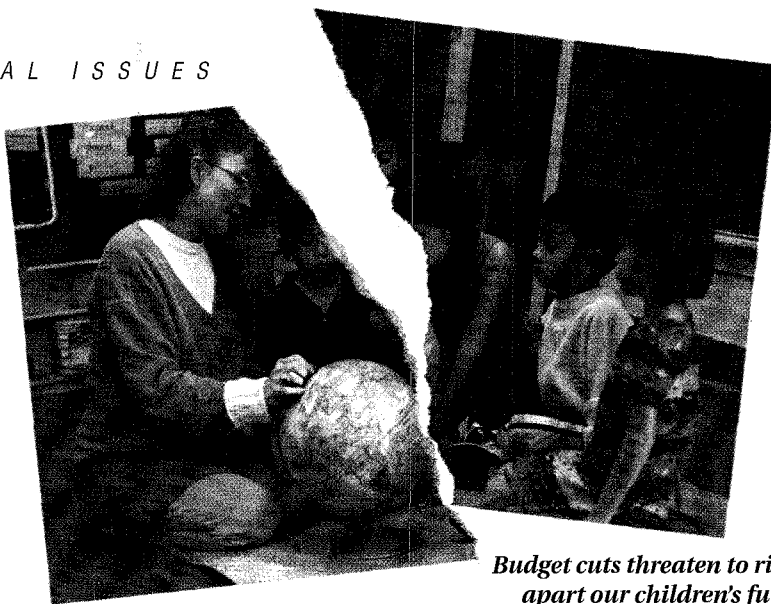


## Where We Stand

THE AFT ON CRITICAL ISSUES

# WILL OUR LEADERS PASS THE BACK-TO- SCHOOL TEST?

***Elected officials have to provide the support to keep education reforms working.***



***Budget cuts threaten to rip apart our children's futures***

**Y**ou don't have to look far to find public schools where commonsense education reforms like class size reduction, proven reading programs, and higher standards are leading to increased achievement for students. But it's even easier to see that many successful education programs are now seriously threatened by the fiscal crisis gripping the nation and by the failure of many elected officials to stand strong for these reforms.

Across the country, a collision course has been set in motion. State education budgets are being squeezed ever tighter, jeopardizing reforms that are already making a difference. At the same time, school districts are striving to raise standards and to comply with the demands of the federal No Child Left Behind law. But neither the president nor the congressional majority has matched the worthwhile requirements of this important legislation with the federal support necessary for schools and students to achieve its goals.

### ***Standing up for what's right***

Some state leaders, determined to keep their states' schools on track, have taken a principled stand against shortsighted cuts to education.

North Carolina Gov. Mike Easley, for example, has supported education despite lean times. While other states have been laying off teachers and trimming or eliminating education programs, North Carolina expanded prekindergarten, added more grades to its class size reduction program, increased teacher salaries, and worked to keep higher education affordable.

Gov. Easley rightly calls these investments "a clear signal to the business community that North Carolina is going to graduate some sharp people." What's more, he adds, "with other states cutting education, it gives us a chance to make rapid improvement in relative terms."

And in Mississippi, despite a very tight budget, Gov. Ronnie Musgrove has pledged that the funding formula for state schools "will get all the money it needs" while he is in office.

Gov. Musgrove knows that Mississippi's future requires an unwavering commitment to education. As he questioned, "Will our children have to leave our state to find jobs?" Fixing local schools, he said, "is our chance to improve quality of life." Maintaining—and increasing—education resources is not easy during these times, but these state leaders, among others, understand that such wise investments will have significant and lasting benefits.

Education spending should focus on what works. Citizens need to know that their leaders are providing the funding necessary for successful education reforms to keep making a difference. Many officials have allowed a bad situation to get even worse by avoiding tough decisions and abandoning investments in education. That's the wrong choice to make.

**Sandra Feldman, President, American Federation of Teachers**



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